From Roman Port to Monastic Domain
The Evolution, Management and Legacy of the Monastic Landscape of the Abbey of Santa Maria di Pero in Monastier di Treviso in the Veneto.

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2nd assessor: dr. Sabrina Corbellini, University of Groningen

Images on cover:
From top to bottom:
Detail of the 1680’s map of Monastier (State Archives of Treviso, Mappe antiche, b.11)
Detail of 1980’s topographical map of Monastier, see: http://www.pcn.minambiente.it/viewer/-Carta IGM 25:000, consulted October 2012.
Image of Monastery entrance taken by author in October 2012.
Foreword

My fascination with monastic landscapes started when I visited Dunwhich whilst on a family holiday in England about twelve years ago. The greyfriars priory may be in ruins but it interested me very much what such a beautiful ruin could have meant for the monks and the inhabitants of the town.

What interested me most about monasteries, and I say this based on subsequent monasteries and convents I visited in the subsequent years, is that they often gave the impression of being very stable elements in the landscape. In other words they seemed both anchored in and intrinsically part of the landscape. They added a whole layer of meaning and value to their surroundings. Just by looking at the ruins of the priory you could not help thinking of what it once must have looked like and that centuries before, this spot in the landscape was occupied by people and a fully functioning monastery, not just a ruin. This bond is what made me eventually choose monastic gardens as the subject of my bachelor thesis. Whilst researching the subject I happened to find the book Monastic Landscapes by James Bond, this gave a very comprehensive outline of the different orders and their influence on the landscape of England. I was so inspired to research a monastic landscape (not just an element of them such as the gardens) that I knew immediately that this would be the subject of my master thesis. The main question was: which monastic landscape would I be investigating and where?

My father suggested the Benedictine abbey in Monastier di Treviso in the province of Veneto in Italy. He had stayed on the farm of his brother-in-law for eight months in 1968. The abbey was still largely intact save the church that had been shelled during the First World War. To make the task of researching this landscape even more interesting was the information that my uncle's family, the Mattiuzzi, had been tenants of the monks since the foundation of the abbey a thousand years ago. Their farm house was still standing and inhabited by the family. It stood not 200 meters from the gates of the abbey. After hearing this I would have defied any landscape historian not to jet over there and get to work with such a heritage.

It was therefore not long after finishing the first reconnaissance stage of research that I found myself confronting an impressive set of cloisters both ancient and of a more recent date lying on the banks of the Meolo river in Monastier. Along with the feeling of stability the buildings gave the impression of an aura of smugness, a feeling of a job well done. The stones, unfortunately, would not speak but I had other methods of investigating. What follows proved to be extremely interesting research which was a pleasure to conduct and will hopefully pass on the same enthusiasm for the subject that the author and many of the inhabitants of Monastier feel for the subject.
Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank my father for suggesting the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero to me as research topic and for furnishing me with very interesting information about the area gleaned in his youth when staying in the Via Casaria.

Special thanks goes to my uncle Zeno Mattiuzzo for the stupendous translation of the 16th century contract (appendix 1) and the information he provided about his family’s farm that forms such an important part of this paper and even more importantly the history of the landscape of Monastier di Treviso. I would like to thank my mother, sister and brother for all their support and advice which helped me complete this thesis.

To my second supervisor, guide, local history buff and all things nautical expert I give my sincere and grateful thanks for the help I was given in getting to know the landscape of Monastier and advice on all things archaeological. I also thank my expert translator and friend Laura Bergamo for her help and unflagging interest in the subject of this thesis. It was much appreciated and admired. To Raffaella and Filippo and children I would like to express my gratitude for having provided me with accommodation on both my research journeys to the Veneto.

In any research librarians and archive staff are invaluable allies, although the staff of all the libraries and archives I visited was extremely helpful I would still like to direct special thanks to Tania Botta and her assistant of Monastier’s local library. Thank you for your outstanding help in giving me access to the Codex Pirensis.
Summary

Introduction

Monastic landscapes have been defined as areas where the monks evidently had a hand in changing, managing or otherwise affecting the lay-out of the landscape. Because they very often survive in some way either as traces in the landscape or the buildings themselves, they can tell us much about Mediaeval landscapes. They are usually also well documented via their chronicles which were kept by the monks. The abbey of Santa Maria di Pero (Our Lady of Pero) is no different in this respect.

The abbey is situated in the North-West of Italy in the province Veneto. It is located very near to the Venetian lagoon and only 14 km from the city of Treviso, the capital of the province in which the abbey stands. What makes this monastic landscape different from others is that the Romans had reclaimed this area before the monks. This was the only large scale cultivation of the area before the monks arrived. Because the Romans were colonists and likely veteran legionnaires this area was centuriated. In other words the Roman field demarcation and measuring system was used in farming the landscape, meaning that a lattice work of roads dividing the land into centuria (squares of 100 roman feet) had been laid on the landscape. However, between the Hun and Magyar invasions of 452 and 958 A.D. (the date of the foundation of the monastery) the Roman centuriated landscape had rapidly become overgrown and marshy. Barbarian invasions, dispersion of residents and flooding of several big rivers were the cause of this change. After this deterioration of the farmland the monks had to reclaim the area again as it had reverted to forest and marsh.

The most important question that can be asked then about the landscape and what the heritage of this landscape means or can mean to our knowledge about Mediaeval monastic landscapes is:
What was the evolution of the domain of the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero in Monastier di Treviso from Roman times throughout the Middle Ages and of what importance is this monastic past to the current landscape's heritage?

The early landscape

The lower plain of the Veneto is formed primarily by river clay deposited here by the many rivers that cross the plain in an East-West direction and flow into the lagoon. The chief river is the Piave and the abbey is situated in its floodplain. Other rivers like the Meolo and Vallio which run through the abbey's property and formed its borders for two hundred years are spring fed other than the Piave, which has its source in the Alps.

The area in Roman times was triangulated between the roman cities of Tarvisium (Treviso), Opitergium (Oderzo) and Altino. The latter was an important trade port and Roman city on the coast of the lagoon. The area formed the agra or farming district of the city of Treviso. This means that it sold or traded its crops with or to the citizens of Treviso.

The Via Annia was completed in 138 B.C. stretching from Adria (a Roman colony South of the river Po) to Altinum and ultimately Concordia and Aquileia. Aquileia would later become the seat of the Patriarch of Aquileia to whom the abbot would be directly answerable to. He would also form the link between the abbey and its founder, the Holy Roman Emperor. Aquileia was a Roman colony founded in 181 B.C. to hold down this part of the Roman Empire's border.

The barbarian invasions starting with Attila the Hun in 452 A.D. laid much to waste in the area and caused the decline of cities such as Opitergium and Altino but ultimately it was the flood of 589 A.D. that went so much towards destroying the centuriation of Monastier. The area never recovered from this disastrous flood of the Piave until the monastery was founded. Pockets of inhabitation farmed enclosures in the woods and only the Roman port on the river Meolo was still
in use by 880 A.D. It was on the site of this port that the abbey was founded, it was incorporated into the abbey compound.

**The Mediaeval landscape of the Abbey of Santa Maria del Pero (Our Lady of Pero) in Monastier**

The Holy Roman Emperor Henry II issues a charter in 1017, in which he confirms the donations made to the abbey by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I. In this charter the borders of the abbey lands are formed by the rivers Meolo and Vallio. The borders of the abbey's property do not change until the year 1200 when Ezzelino II da Romano (a noble from Vicenza) who had conquered large parts of the Veneto grants the abbey on 13th March 1200 the rights and privileges to the entire area between the rivers Vallio and Piave.

By the mid 13th century the abbey's property had become so extensive that there were seven parishes. The church attached to the abbey was dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption in the mid 1200's. Before this the church had been dedicated to Saint Peter. The parishes belonging to the abbey were the following: Sant'Andrea (St Andrew) di Barbarana, Fossalta di Piave, San Mauro in Rovarè and San Lorenzo of Pradancino, San Marco in Fagarè, San Biagio di Callalta, and Zenson di Piave.

The first donation of land is made in 1167 and concerns a plot of land in the city of Treviso. The number of donations increases throughout the 12th and 13th centuries. During the early Middle Ages the abbey embarks on major reclamation projects between the Meolo and Vallio rivers. The earliest and most important project undertaken is the digging of the Fossa Bruna ditch that acted as a drainage ditch and reclamation ditch for the fields in the area between the Vallio and Meolo rivers which the Fossa Bruna connects. Another project was the implementation of a rainwater collection system based on a reservoir built under the well in the abbey's cloister. This reservoir is connected to other wells in the area and thus provided fresh and purified water to the farmers. Much of the current fields show an orientation that can be traced back to a map made in 1680. By contrasting this map and aerial photography and old topographical maps the ancient fields can be reconstructed. Not much has changed allowing the reconstruction of the orientation and size of the reclamation projects. The field names (both of certain areas of fields and very local field names) have proven to contain the use these fields were put too or a description of the original landscape.

In the 14th century the property of the monks suffers increasingly from large scale flooding by the Piave. Then in 1348 (as the black death is sweeping Europe) Venice suffers the worst plague the city has ever experienced. The

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donator</th>
<th>Land Donated</th>
<th>Year of Donation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry II Holy Roman Emperor</td>
<td>All the land between the Vallio and Meolo rivers</td>
<td>1017 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerarda del fu Zigenulfo</td>
<td>A plot of land in the city of Treviso</td>
<td>1167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier di Medade</td>
<td>Cedes all his rights in the forest of Vallio, the Frassenedo marshes and a farm in Roveredo</td>
<td>1172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier di Medade</td>
<td>All the land between San Pietro Novello and the abbey of Our Lady of Pero</td>
<td>1196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezzelino da Romano I Chief magistrate of Treviso</td>
<td>Land in Villanova (San Pietro Novello)</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ussinello da Medade</td>
<td>All the land he possessed in Gonfo near the Piave river</td>
<td>1192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezzelino da Romano II Noble from Vicenza</td>
<td>Grants the abbey of Our Lady of Pero all the land between the Meolo and Piave rivers</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of the donations to the abbey between 1017 and 1200 A.D. The ranks or place in the society of Gerardo del fu Zigenulfo, Olivier di Medade and Ussinello da Medade are not known.
rest of the region is also severely affected. Another plague epidemic breaks out in 1361 and lasts until 1363. As a consequence the monks face an economical as well as a vocational crisis. To supplement the little income they are still receiving or making by trading the produce of their tenants the monks embark on a large scale deforestation project. Throughout the 14th century the abbey sells a lot of wood. In an effort to find another source of income the abbot Giovanni Vitturi in 1390 makes the decision to start renting land to Venetian nobles. His successor abbot Marco Barozzi continues this policy but it is not enough to save the abbey. In 1448 Giovanni Barbo is appointed abbot but for his own profit starts to sell land to the nobles of Venice. He totally neglects the religious life in the monastery and the upkeep of the buildings. In 1469 abbot Barbo resigns his post and retires leaving the abbey crippled both in its religious function as in its economic state. The decision is made by the Pope to place the abbey in the temporary care of the Benedictine assembly headed by the abbey of Santa Giustina in Padua. The assembly appoints Antonio Bembo as abbot for the abbey of Our Lady of Pero. It is his task to ascertain whether the abbey can remain autonomous by becoming once more self sufficient. This proved not to be the case and in 1493 the abbey is annexed to the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in the Venetian lagoon.

The Venetian monks were able to wrought a complete change in the fortunes of the abbey although this took some time. The first project was to repair the monastic buildings and especially the church. The farmhouses of the tenants were repaired during a repair project begun in 1543. However, since 1502 the monks complained of the tenants who had run amok during the reign of the previous abbots and now were damaging the fields and trees by using too much manure too often and indiscriminately cutting branches of trees for use as fodder. They were also accused of harvesting hay and mulches without proper authorisation and doing damage to the farm buildings. The abbey eventually signed a new contract with all tenants stipulating precisely how they were to act towards each other, what crops to grow and how much they had to pay of these crops, the servitudes owed to the monks and how much of the harvest they had to pay and what special crops to grow (such as flax) and how much of them to grow.

The Venetian republic also carried out hydrographical projects on the mainland during the late 15th and the whole of the 16th and 17th centuries. These projects were undertaken to improve the connection between Venice and the mainland on which Venice was dependant for food and other products such as flax for ropes for the shipbuilding industry and wood for the ships, pylons for the buildings and fuel. The port of the abbey continued to play an important part in the trade between the abbey and Venice.

Legacy of the monastic landscape

A lot remains of the monastic buildings in the landscape including the abbey and many tenants’ farmhouses. Also buildings like that of the dairy remain and the Mediaeval roads. The field names and toponyms evoke the condition of the landscape when the monks first arrived and the evolution wrought under their auspices.

What is arguably the oldest farmhouse in the region is still standing and still inhabited by the original tenants of the monks. The Mattiuzzo farmhouse is an excellent example of the monastic farmhouse. Fitted with a large hay-loft, barn and grain attics it bears witness to the ancient mixed farming agricultural heritage. The mulberry trees are a relic of several specialised crops the abbey obliged its tenants to produce, in this case silk from silk worms. It is this intangible heritage that makes the interviewing and inclusion of such case-studies of tenants so vital to understanding the management and evolution of a monastic landscape.

However, because of the practice of the Count of selling farms and in some cases evicting the tenants, the old fields are being amalgamated so as to form larger fields in order to grow wheat in large quantities. This not only affects the legibility of the monastic origin of the fields but also the retention of the intangible heritage in the area. The old tenants move away and their stories are lost. The connection the youth has with the landscape has further eroded because of the loss of the Patriarchal society and the passing on of oral history.
Conclusion

In broad terms the conclusion can be made that the monastic landscape is still intact and clearly readable. It offers enough information on the management and evolution of the landscape to make good comparisons with other researched monastic landscapes both in Italy and elsewhere. It is however under threat because of the amalgamation of the fields and especially because of the loss of intangible heritage throughout the region. Many more interviews of tenant farmers are needed and this very soon as many of these farmers that still remember the old way of life are very old. The hope is that because the inhabitants of Monastier identify themselves mostly with the Mediaeval history of the area they will respond to interest in their landscape very well and gain interest themselves.
Introduzione

I paesaggi monastici sono definiti come aree che sono state modificate, anche nel paesaggio, dai monaci stessi. Molto spesso, in qualche modo, sopravvivono tracce nel paesaggio anche degli edifici stessi, che possono dirci molto sui paesaggi medievali.

Solitamente, le tracce paesaggistiche, trovano poi riscontro nelle cronache, ben documentate, che regolarmente erano tenute dai monaci. L’abbazia di Santa Maria di Pero (Madonna del Pero) non fa eccezione.

L’abbazia è situata nel nord-ovest dell’Italia, nella provincia veneta. Si trova molto vicino alla laguna di Venezia ed a soli 14 km dalla città di Treviso che è anche il capoluogo della provincia omonima. A rendere questo paesaggio monastico diverso dagli altri è il fatto che già i Romani, molto prima dei monaci, recuperarono e utilizzarono quest’area. Questa fu l’unica coltivazione su larga scala della zona prima che arrivassero i monaci.

Poiché i Romani erano coloni e, probabilmente legionari veterani, questa zona era un centuriato. In altre parole, per frazionare il terreno agricolo, fu utilizzato il sistema di misurazione e demarcazione romano chiamato centuria, che permetteva mediante un reticolo di strade di suddividere il terreno in centurie (quadrati di 1000 piedi romani).

Tuttavia, nel lasso di tempo trascorso tra le入侵zioni degli Unni nel 452 d.C. e dei Magiari nel 958 d.C. (data di fondazione del monastero), il paesaggio romano centuriato lasciato incolto, diventò rapidamente paludoso. Le入侵izioni Barbariche, lo spopolamento della zona e alcune alluvioni, furono tra le cause del cambiamento paesaggistico.

Dopo la progressiva paludizzazione dei terreni, i monaci si trovarono costretti, al loro arrivo, alla totale bonifica dell’area.

La domanda più importante che può essere posta in merito a questo paesaggio, e l’importanza che l’eredità culturale e paesaggistica ha, o che potrebbe avere, per ampliare le nostre conoscenze riguardo i paesaggi monastici medievali è: Qual è stata l’evoluzione del dominio dell’abbazia di Santa Maria di Pero a Monastier di Treviso dall’epoca romana attraverso il Medioevo? Quanto è rilevante questo passato monastico in merito al patrimonio culturale del paesaggio attuale?

Il paesaggio antico

La pianura del Veneto è costituita principalmente dai detriti depositati e stratificati provenienti dai numerosi fiumi che attraversano la pianura in direzione est-ovest e che sfociano nella laguna veneta. Il fiume maggiore è il Piave e l’abbazia giace sulla piana alluvionale di quest’ultimo.

Altri fiumi come il Meolo e il Vallio, che scorrono ai margini dell’abbazia e che hanno dato vita ai confini della stessa per duecento anni, sono fiumi di risorgiva, mentre il Piave nasce nelle Alpi. La zona, in epoca romana, fu al centro di un triangolo costituito dalle tre città romane di Tarvisium (Treviso), Opitergium (Oderzo) e Altinum (Altino). Quest’ultimo, in particolare fu un’importante città nonchè porto commerciale sulla costa lagunare.

L’area in questione costituiva il distretto agricolo della città di Treviso, il che impone che ci fossero scambi e/o commercio di prodotti agricoli con i cittadini di Treviso.

La Via Annia fu ultimata nel 138 a.C., collegava Adria (colonia romana situata a sud del fiume Po) ad Altino,

Aquileia fu una colonia romana fondata nel 181 a.C. con lo scopo di contenere questo tratto di confine dell'Impero. Le invasioni Barbariche che ebbero inizio con Attila l'Unno nel 452 d.C. provocarono un forte spopolamento della zona e causarono il declino di città come Altinum e Opitergium, il colpo di grazia fu l'alluvione avvenuta nel 589 d.C., che distrusse definitivamente il centuriated di Monastier di Treviso.

L'area non si riprese più a causa degli ingenti danni causati dalla disastrosa alluvione del Piave, fino a quando fu fondato il monastero. Erano presenti aree recintate e coltivate, circondate da boschetti. L'unico porto era quello sito sul fiume Meolo ed era ancora in uso nel 880 d.C.

L'abbazia è stata fondata proprio nel luogo dove sorgeva il porto, quindi esso è stato successivamente annesso al complesso dell'abbazia stessa.

**Il paesaggio medievale dell'Abbazia di Santa Maria del Pero a Monastier**

Il Sacro Romano Imperatore Enrico II, nel 1017 emise un trattato nel quale confermava la donazione fatta all'abbazia dal Sacro Romano Imperatore Ottone I. In questo documento, i confini dell'abbazia erano formati dai fiumi Meolo e Vallio.

I confini territoriali dell'abbazia non cambiarono sino al 1200 quando, Ezzelino II da Romano (un nobile vicentino) che conquistò buona parte del Veneto, concedette all'abbazia, il 13 marzo 1200, diritti e privilegi sull'intera area compresa tra i Fiumi Vallio e Piave.

Durante la metà del XIII secolo le proprietà dell'abbazia diventarono così estese che furono divise in ben sette parrocchie. Nella metà del 1200, la chiesa che sorgeva di fianco all'abbazia, precedentemente dedicata a San Pietro, fu dedicata alla Madonna dell'Assunzione (L'Assunta).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donatore</th>
<th>Terra Donata</th>
<th>Anno di Donazione</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacro Romano Imperatore Enrico II</td>
<td>Tutte le terre comprese tra I fiumi Vallio e Meolo</td>
<td>1017 D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerarda del fu Zigenulfo</td>
<td>Un appezzamento di terra nella città di Treviso</td>
<td>1167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier di Medade</td>
<td>Cede tutti i suoi diritti sulla foresta di Vallio, paludi Frassenedo e una fattoria a Roveredo.</td>
<td>1172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier di Medade</td>
<td>Tutte le terre comprese tra San Pietro Novello e l'abbazia di Santa Maria del Pero</td>
<td>1196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezzelino da Romano II, un gentilizio di Vicenza</td>
<td>Terreno a Villanova (San Pietro Novello)</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ussinello da Medade</td>
<td>Tutto il terreno da lui posseduto a Gonfo, nelle vicinanze del fiume Piave</td>
<td>1192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezzelino da Romano II Nobile vicentino.</td>
<td>Concede all'abbazia di Santa Maria del Pero tutto il territorio compreso tra i fiumi Meolo e Piave 1200</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elenco di donazione fatta alla badia tra 1017 e il 1200 D.C.

Le parrocchie minori che sorgevano sui territori dell'abbazia furono: Sant'Andrea di Barbarana, Fossalta di Piave, San Mauro in Rovarè, San Lorenzo di Prandancino, San Marco in Fagarè, San Biagio di Callalta e Zenson di
Piave.

La prima donazione di terra è avvenuta nel 1167 e comprendeva un appezzamento nella città di Treviso. Il numero delle donazioni aumentò nel corso del XII e del XIII secolo. Durante il primo Medioevo l’abbazia avviò considerevoli progetti di bonifica tra i fiumi Vallio e Meolo.

Le prime, nonché le più importanti opere messe in atto furono: L’escavazione del canale Fossa Bruna che funse da bacino di drenaggio/scarico, e la bonifica dei canali di irrigazione agricola nelle aree tra i fiumi Vallio e Meolo direttamente collegate al canale Fossa Bruna.

Un’altra opera compiuta fu la realizzazione di un sistema di raccolta dell’acqua piovana che consisteva in una cisterna posta al di sotto del pozzo presente nel chiostro dell’abbazia. Il bacino idrico dell’abbazia fu connesso ad altri pozzi presenti nelle aree limitrofe, consentendo agli agricoltori di disporre di acqua fresca e pulita.

Molti degli odierni campi agricoli rivelano ancora un orientamento che ha il suo riscontro in una mappa risalente al 1680. Confrontando questa mappa con fotografie aeree e antiche carte topografiche, si può dedurre l’orientamento degli antichi campi. Non sono avvenuti grandi cambiamenti nonostante il cambio di orientamento e le opere di bonifica.

I nomi dei campi (sia di alcune aree di campo e dei campi denominati con appellativi del luogo), confermano di contenere parole che indicavano l’uso del campo stesso o una parola che descriveva, in breve, l’antico paesaggio circostante.

Durante il XIV secolo, la proprietà dei monaci subì sempre di più le conseguenze delle disastrose alluvioni causate dal fiume Piave. Di seguito (mentre la peste stava mietendo vittime in tutta Europa) Venezia si trovò ad affrontare la peggiore epidemia che la città avesse mai subito.

Il resto della regione fu colpito duramente. Un altro episodio epidemico si verificò nel 1361 e durò sino al 1363. Di conseguenza i monaci dovettero affrontare non solo una crisi economica, ma anche una crisi occupazionale. Per incrementare il loro reddito limitato, i monaci ricevevano o scambiavano parte dei prodotti dei loro mezzi-dri, inoltre avviarono una considerevole opera di deforestazione.

Durante il XIV secolo l’abbazia vendette moltissima legna. Nel 1390, in un tentativo di trovare altre fonti di reddito, l’abate Giovanni Vitturi decise di incominciare ad affittare terreni ai nobili Veneziani.

Il suo successore, l’abate Marco Barozzi, portò avanti quest’opera ma non fu sufficiente a risollevare le sorti finanziarie dell’abbazia. Nel 1448 Giovanni Barbo fu nominato abate, ma incominciò a vendere terreni ai nobili Veneziani per il proprio interesse e guadagno personale. Trascorsero totalmente la vita religiosa all’interno del monastero e la manutenzione dello stesso e degli edifici a ad esso pertinenti.

Nel 1469 l’abate Barbo si dimise dalla sua carica e si ritirò, lasciando l’abbazia profondamente danneggiata sia nelle sue funzioni religiose che nel suo stato economico. Il Papa decise di porre temporaneamente l’abbazia sotto la custodia dell’assemblea Benedettina coordinata dall’abbazia di Santa Giustina a Padova.

L’assemblea nominò Antonio Bembo come abate dell’abbazia di Santa Maria del Pero.

Ad esso fu dato il compito di verificare che l’abbazia riguadagnasse una condizione di autonomia tornando ad essere nuovamente autosufficiente. L’abbazia si rivelò, però, non essere più in grado di recuperare autonomia ed autosufficienza, così nel 1493 fu annessa all’abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore nella laguna Veneta.

I monaci furono in grado di apportare un totale cambiamento nelle sorti dell’abbazia, nonostante ci sia voluto
molto tempo. Il primo progetto fu quello di restaurare gli edifici monastici, in particolare la chiesa. Le case coloniche dei mezzadri furono restaurate nel corso di una opera di restaurazione incominciata nel 1543.

Tuttavia, dal 1502 i monaci si lamentavano della cattiva gestione dei terreni da parte dei mezzadri durante il regno dei precedenti abati, in quanto stavano danneggiando campi e alberi utilizzando troppo letame e troppo spesso, e tagliando indiscriminatamente rami e alberi riutilizzandoli come foraggio.

Furono, altresì, accusati di aver mietuto il fieno e pacciamato senza una vera e propria autorizzazione, danneggiando, inoltre, gli edifici pertinenti la casa colonica. L'abbazia, infine, stipulò e firmò un nuovo contratto con tutti i mezzadri, precisando come avrebbero dovuto comportarsi l'uno nei confronti dell'altro, quali colture coltivare e il loro prezzo, i lavori dovuti gratuitamente ai monaci, la quantità di raccolto che avrebbero dovuto conferire, quali colture speciali (ad esempio il lino) coltivare e la quantità da coltivare.

La Repubblica Veneziana si occupò, inoltre, di avviare opere idriche sulla terraferma nel corso della fine del XV secolo e per tutto il XVI e il XVII secolo. Questi progetti furono intrapresi allo scopo di incrementare i collegamenti tra Venezia e la terraferma, dalla quale Venezia era dipendente per quanto riguardava il cibo ed altri prodotti quali il lino impiegato nella fabbricazione del cordame nautico e del legno, impiegato sia per la fabbricazione delle navi stesse, per le strutture portanti degli edifici, che come combustibile.

Il porto dell'abbazia continuò a svolgere un ruolo fondamentale nei commerci tra Venezia e l'abbazia stessa.

**Patrimonio del paesaggio monastico**

Oggi, nel paesaggio, sono presenti moltissimi resti degli edifici monastici inclusa l'abbazia e molte case coloniche. Inoltre, resti di edifici come il caseificio e le strade medievali. I nomi dei vari campi e i toponimi, rievocano l'aspetto del paesaggio all'arrivo dei monaci e l'evoluzione avvenuta durante il loro passaggio. Le case coloniche più antiche della zona sono ancora in piedi e tutti gli abitati dai discendenti degli antichi mezzadri dei monaci. La casa colonica della famiglia Mattiuzzo è un esempio eccellente delle tipiche case coloniche monastiche.

Dotata di un grande fienile, stalla e un granaio, essa testimonia l'antico retaggio agricolo dell'agricoltura mista. I gelsi sono reperti viventi che ci ricordano una delle tante colture speciali che i monaci obbligavano i mezzadri a lavorare, in questo caso la seta, ottenuta dai bachi da seta.

Sono questi patrimoni astratti che rendono le testimonianze dei mezzadri e l'inclusione di questi casi, così essenziali per comprendere a fondo la gestione e l'evoluzione del paesaggio monastico. Tuttavia, a causa della pratica del Conte di vendere le fattorie e sfrattare i mezzadri, i terreni sono stati accoppiati allo scopo di creare campi molto più grandi nei quali praticare l'agricoltura intensiva ed in grandi quantità.

Questa pratica non colpisce solo la leggibilità delle origini monastiche dei campi, ma anche la conservazione del patrimonio immateriale dell'area. I vecchi mezzadri se ne vanno e le loro storie sono perdute.

Il legame che la gioventù ha con il paesaggio si è ulteriormente eroso a causa della fine della società patriarcale e il declino della storia orale.

**Conclusioni**

In generale si può concludere che il paesaggio monastico è ancora intatto e facilmente leggibile. Offre informazioni soddisfacenti sul piano gestionale ed evolutivo del paesaggio con le quali si possono attuare buoni paragoni con altri paesaggi monastici sia in Italia che in qualsiasi altro luogo.

Tuttavia, è minacciato costantemente dalla fusione dei vari campi e, in special modo, dalla perdita del patrimonio immateriale della zona.
Sono necessarie molte più interviste ai mezzadri, e in un tempo relativamente breve in quanto, la maggior parte degli agricoltori che ancora ricordano la vita e il paesaggio di un tempo, sono molto anziani.

La speranza è che, in quanto gli abitanti di Monastier si identificano profondamente nella storia medievale del posto, possano fare in modo, nel loro interesse, di conservare l'antico paesaggio.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Fig. 1 The abbey of Santa Maria di Peroin Monastier di Treviso, the buildings on the left (nearest the bell tower) are the oldest.
1.1 Research purpose

Monastic landscapes have been defined as areas where the monks evidently had a hand in changing, managing or otherwise affecting the lay-out of the landscape; which is why they offer a very interesting research topic because they can enlighten the academic researcher on so many aspects of the (early) Middle Ages and beyond. The monastic buildings or ruins offer us much information on architecture, dating of the monastic buildings, construction techniques and building materials. Chronicles give us dates of projects undertaken like the digging of ditches and deforestation of certain areas and land disputes. Maps or descriptions (mostly dealing with disputes) outline and describe the territory that belonged to the monastery or convent.

The Veneto region in Italy counted many religious houses of various orders in the Middle Ages, some of which are still functioning today. The Benedictine order was most prevalent among the orders that founded monasteries in the region and are still well known for their reclamation projects. This is not surprising as most of the Veneto is made up of a fluvial plain whose many rivers flow from the Alps and meander across the fertile flat terrain into the Venetian lagoon or the Adriatic. Much of the coastal region used to be swamp which the monks started to reclaim. They also carried out vast drainage projects in the hinterland. A powerful Benedictine monastery actively involved in this work was the abbey of Santa Maria del Pero (Our Lady of Pero), the subject of this thesis.

The abbey is situated roughly 14 km North-East of the provincial capital Treviso in the province of the same name. At the height of its development the abbey with its port being located on one of the major water routes to the lagoon controlled trade between Venice and a large portion of the fertile farming Country on the terra ferma. In fact it was the presence of this port before the arrival of the monks that could explain the presence of the abbey’s exact location on the river Meolo, in older times referred to as the Pero. This harbour was called the portus pirensis and is first mentioned in a peace treaty made on the 13th January 880 A.D. between Valperto, the Patriarch of Aquileia (in

1 Sartor, I., 2010, p.45.
the clerical hierarchy on the level of an archbishop) and the Doge of Venice (Orso I). It documented the agreement of the former to uphold the trading rights of the Venetians with the main-land and the latter to refrain from harassing or destroying any of the ports in the territory held by the Patriarch. The treaty had come about after a conflict between the aforementioned Valperto and Orso I. The Doge had managed to block the mouths of the rivers leading into the lagoon, effectively blockading the ports along these rivers and forcing the Patriarch to come to terms.

In this period the territory that would later belong to the abbey was part of the Trevigian March (*Marca Trevigiana*) that belonged to the Middle (Frankish) Kingdom. In other words it formed part of the Southern border of the Empire (March) in Italy and fell under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch. It made sense to found a monastery in this part of the March as a monastery is governed by an abbot whose successor is elected, not like a secular lord who passes his holdings on to his heirs and therefore runs the risk of losing his domain if the family dies out.

Also an abbot would have no reasons to expand his domain like a secular lord through conflict and manipulation. One has to remember that Venice was not part of the Empire when the monastery was founded, the Doge served the Byzantine Emperor, in 880 this was Basil I. Having an ambitious noble controlling these lands could have provoked an attack sooner or later with the Venetians. These political reasons for the choice of a religious order holding these lands would have a profound effect on the evolution of the landscape, even to this day. However, the quality of the land could have been the decisive factor to let the monks take hold of this region,

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although there was a port making trade possible between Venice and the mainland the once cultivated land had become densely forested. The marshes surrounding the Venetian lagoon had grown to encompass large segments of the mainland and some parts were only to be reclaimed in the 19th century.

Before the monastery was founded the only large scale cultivation of the area had been in Roman times. Between the Hun invasion of 452 and 958 A.D. (the date of the foundation of the monastery), the Roman centuriated landscape had rapidly become overgrown and marshy. Barbarian invasions, dispersion of residents and flooding of several big rivers were the cause of this change. The area most effected stretched from the Piave down to just below the city of Treviso.

The centuriation below this point can still clearly be made out on aerophotographic images, namely the area North-East of Padua is often used as an almost perfect example of a Roman centuriated landscape. The process of centuriation of a landscape involved the laying out of a series of roads called the *cardus*, usually running North-South and the *decumanus* running West-East.

This road system produced a grid structure in the landscape formed by the squares demarcated by the roads, each square measured 20x20 actus (710.40 m.), each square was known as a centuria. Depending on the terrain...
the measurements could vary, units of 20x15 have been found in the Veneto. This land measurement system was implemented by the Roman government so that land could easily be divided amongst veteran legionaries as a reward and pension; it also made taxing very easy since the exact total of land owned was known. Because of this it was a system copied by landowners with large estates. Due to the amount of Roman archaeological finds in the area of Monastier di Treviso and the presence of roads with Roman origins there is a consensus of opinion that this region was also centuriated. More importantly the centuriation is oriented on a major Roman road, the Via Claudia Augusta (now only small sections remain in use) running through the Veneto region connecting Italy with Austria across the Alps. However the next thorough development of the landscape only came about under monastic rule. The monks deforested the area and brought it once more under cultivation, they also reclaimed land by digging ditches and improving the drainage system.

The questions then arise: how did the abbey evolve into such a powerful landholder, how did it acquire the land and rights of passage on the river right up to the Venetian lagoon? What did the landscape look like when the monks first arrived because only when we know this can we truly appreciate and gauge the effect of the monks work in the evolution of the landscape and the Mediaeval legacy of the modern landscape.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to ascertain to what extent the abbey of Santa Maria del Pero affected the evolution of the lay-out of the landscape that once fell under her jurisdiction or influence and how much of the Mediaeval changes endure in the present landscape.

1.2 State of the art

Recently there has been much interest in the study of monastic landscapes. In his book ‘Monastic Landscapes’ published in 2002 James Bond brought the subject to the wider attention of scattered researchers sharing this interest.\(^4\) The book was intended to give readers, not just academics, an overview of what records and especially elements in the landscape to keep an eye out for when studying the monastic landscape. That interest in the matter had only increased was affirmed with the publication of a second edition in 2010 and the consequent announcement of an international colloquium on monastic landscapes been held from 12\(^{th}\) to the 14\(^{th}\) October 2011 in Koksjide, Belgium. Speakers from England, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France gave lectures on their research dealing mainly with Cistercian landscapes (the order chosen as theme because the host abbey belonged to this order), although significant lectures on other orders like that of the Knights Templar also featured.

A conclusion of the colloquium was that monastic landscapes carry traces of the monks’ work both tangible and intangible. In the words of the director of the Ten Duinen Abbey museum these traces can sometimes be “painfully obvious in the form of monastic buildings, a material heritage that we can touch, consider and protect because of its logical enhancement of our culture; however they can also be hidden in settlement patterns and other planned elements of the landscape, an immaterial heritage less well known” and therefore less documented.\(^5\) Another conclusion reached was the need to know the state of the landscape before the monks arrived. This should be a priority because only then will we be able to gauge their actual effect on the Countryside. The role of the environment, geology and technology in the lay-out of the landscape in the Middle Ages is fundamental to the understanding of land designating projects undertaken in that period and forms the subject of the book ‘Shaping Mediaeval Landscapes’ by Tom Williamson, published in 2003.\(^6\)

These are important angles of research that have not yet been explored in the landscape of Monastier di Treviso and so will be included in this thesis. For example the climate change (the climate became wetter) has not been used in the explanation of the rapid marsh growth that destroyed much of the cultivated landscape in the area, at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire in any publication on the abbey.\(^7\)

In the case of the Roman landscape of the Veneto, W. Broadhead with his paper published in 2000, has added greatly to the explanation of the Romanisation of the province.\(^8\) In his paper he highlighted the importance of the Roman trade routes in spreading the Roman culture in the North that lead to the peaceful annexation of the Veneto to the Roman Empire. The Veneti, who were the tribe living in this region, were known for aiding the Romans in their battles and many volunteered for military service in the legions. It is not surprising therefore that many legionaries were given farms in

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\(^4\) Bond, J., 2002.
\(^7\) Carton, A. (et al), 2009.
\(^8\) Broadhead, W., 2000.
this region upon retirement. Again the position of Monastier in this network of roads was not touched on in this publication, obviously because the general focus was on the province, but by combining this information with the collection of papers giving a detailed study of the centuriation surrounding Monastier published in 1989, ‘Misurare la terra: centurizasione e coloni nel mondo romano: il caso Veneto’, the climate change and archaeological finds we are able to reconstruct the landscape between the Vallio and the Piave at the time the monks arrived. Although it must be stressed that at present the centuriation is not readily identifiable, even from the air. It has to be pieced together from multiple sources including local knowledge which is one of the most important sources for the identification of the Roman roads as many farmers constantly dig up Roman artefacts and know which roads, or segments of roads, are Roman in origin. The official source on the centuriation of this area is the GIS data supplied by the Geo-data online portal of the province of Treviso. Unfortunately incomplete but based in satellite images it gives the most trustworthy information on the Roman landscape of Monastier between 400 and 958 A.D. This data is supplemented by a map made in the 20th century at about the time of the Second World War by Vittorio Piva, a journalist. This map was the first reconstruction of the area in roman times that was later to be held by the abbey and was for the parish priest Fr. Portogruaro of Monastier, whose book ‘L’Abbazia benedettina di Monastier di Treviso, 950?-1948’ on the abbey was published in 1948.

Starting from ancient times Fr. Portogruaro wrote a socio-historical history of the abbey and its territory. However, considering this approach it is not surprising that his interest was mainly in historical documents. A lot of information is given in these and he wrote about some of the first donations to the abbey but sadly no attempt was made to locate these mills, fisheries (obviously fish traps in the rivers since no fish ponds have been identified), woods and vineyards. His main source was the Codex Pirensis et Praglia which was written starting from the 16th till the beginning of the 19th century, when the abbey was dissolved by Napoleon and later sold in 1838 to Count Ninni. Since this cidez it one of the primary sources on the abbey it deserves to be discussed in detail. The codex or book is made up of a compilation of documents relating to the abbey of Our Lady of Pero dating from the 11th to the 19th century. The period before the 16th century is incomplete, that is to say that very few documents exist pertaining to the period 1000-1500 A.D. The documents that have survived are mostly chartres and Papal Bulls. The reason why so little survived from this period is because the abbey was taken over by the Venetian abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in the late 15th century. The abbey had by that time ben so mismanaged that even the monastic buildings were in urgent need of repair. Not to mention the archives. The monk Eusebius was given the task to collect all records from the archives and catalog them. This he did thoroughly and objectively, stating in the periods to which no documents pertained. Even the chartres and Bulls he transcribed word for word as later came to light in Sartor’s investigation (copies of the chartres exist in Germany and those of the Bulls in archives in Italy). The period 1500-1800 is more complete, containing lists of parishes and locations of farms and villages. All documents are in Latin except for the whole of the 18th century documentation which is written in the Venetian dialect.

The political history in the codex was the main concern of Fr. Portogruaro, he was most interested in the dignitaries that had visited the abbey and much work was made of the nobleman Ezzolino da Romano, who in the 13th century terrorised the province with his raids which are recorded in the same codex. Whilst important for the general history of the abbey this was mostly an economical hazard for the abbey’s profits and the landscape did not suffer in any way that left visible traces.

The most important recent publication dealing with the abbey was only published in 1997 and was written by Ivan Sartor. It is a staggering amount of research on the documents dealing with the abbey. In 2010 a new edition of this book was published in which the history of the abbey was brought up to date by the addition of chapters

11  Portogruaro, D. Fr., 1948.
12  Sartor, I., 2010, pp.41-44.
dealing with the first and second world war and the devastating flood of the Piave river in the 1960’s. The flood
effected large sections of the old monastic lands. The book covered the history of the land held by the abbey from
Neolithic times up to the present day but of necessity the chapters on the Neolithic, Roman and early Mediaeval
eras were short for want of information. Only the territory belonging to the abbey was included so the import-
ance of Monastier in the Roman landscape of the Veneto was all but ignored, therefore there was a substantial
gap in the history of the abbey’s landscape roughly encompassing the early Middle Ages. The information had
to be sought elsewhere, not so much in documents but in traces in the landscape, field names, toponyms and
hydronyms.
His work augments that of Fr. Portogruaro but again, the research was done from an historical perspective. The
social and above all political history of the abbey was the main focus. The ditches, mills, port and landing places
along the river Meolo -although mentioned- were not dealt with in a way that fully explained their part in the
monks’ influence in the evolution of the landscape or rather the landscape itself was not the primary research
subject. Only a handful of maps are included. The book is obviously intended for people who are familiar with
the area, for a stranger it is very difficult to visualise where what was happening because hardly any of the field
names or place names is given on a map. It is clear that the mention of work done by the monks was only im-
portant for the growth in importance of the abbey, where these elements were actually located and how they
were managed was not explained. This is where the landscape historical approach can best serve the understand-
ing of the evolution of the domain of the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero. By analysing satellite images and tracing
the Mediaeval elements still present in the landscape, analysing archaeological finds, hydrography, toponyms
(that received no thorough attention in any literature on the subject), oral history and architecture the Mediaeval
landscape can be reconstructed and the evolution explained.
The latter element (architecture) is a vital element in the explanation of the management of the monastic land-
scape in Monastier, as was explained in the book published in the 1990’s by the local history group of Monasti-
er that showed that the Mediaeval farmhouses belonging to the abbey all have the same lay-out.¹³ This type of
farmhouse is known as a Massaria. They are recognisable by their long rectangular lay-out with the barn at the
one end encompassing about one third of the building. The barn has a hay-loft above it from which the hay can
be dropped down into troughs from which the cattle can feed. Knowing their lay-out helped find old farms that
belonged to the abbey although there is no mention of them in the codex or other documents.

Since the foundation of the monastery, water management was a priority; in order to cultivate the land the dig-
ging of ditches and canalisation projects were organised, though any work that took place (sometimes on a grand
scale) was only minimally present in publications on the abbey.
In their paper published in 2007 Lynch and Cancienne discussed in their paper ‘The Venetian lagoon as a series of
engineered ecological parameters’ the management of the rivers flowing into the lagoon by the Venetian Republic.
From 1300 onwards major rivers were diverted to stop the deposition of sediments in the lagoon. The authors
see the lagoon as the result of: “A series of engineered ecological parameters”.¹⁴ This study has answered a lot of
questions concerning canals and dried up riverbeds seen on aero- photographic maps but not addressed in liter-
ature. However, being a study of the hydrographical problems faced by the Venetians it naturally focuses on the
area directly bordering the lagoon. How the changes of the courses of these rivers affected the abbey’s lands was
understandably not addressed.
A set of recent papers dealing with the management of water courses in the Veneto published in 2012 by Daniel
Canzian (et al) has shed light on water, forest and environment management in the province between the 12th
and 16th centuries. It is not surprising that only one paper focuses on the area of Monastier because the Veneto is
home to many rivers, all of which at one time or another were canalised or the course altered in some way. What
is interesting is that rather than hydrography it deals with three forests that the municipality of Treviso owned or
bought in the 14th century.¹⁵ Although this is fascinating information for viewing the forests from the eyes of the

municipality it does not add (directly) to the knowledge of the water management, in particular the ditches dug in the territory. The rest of the papers concern other parts of the Veneto with one paper focussing entirely on the symbolism of marshes, the sea and rivers in Mediaeval texts.

Finally the greatest neglect is that of the tenants of the monks, especially their place in the heritage potential of monastic landscapes. For Northern Europe the study of these tenants is difficult, most monasteries were dissolved in the 16th century both in England and The Netherlands. Some managed to hold out until the 19th century when they were suppressed and finally dissolved by Napoleon as happened to the abbey of Our Lady of Pero. If there is any information on a tenant the chances are great that his family no longer occupies the same farm as it did when they served the monks even if the farm is still located in the same place. There is however a chance that the family still occupies the farm or lives nearby as in the case of the Mattiuzzo farm discussed in this thesis. This chance will probably be greater in Southern Europe than Northern Europe although tenants of the monasteries in the Lowlands of Scotland, according to Scott in his book ‘The monastery’ were known to still occupy their farms in the early 19th century. If so, valuable information can be assembled on local history, the date of the farm buildings and field names by interviewing the family. The farm should then be included in the landscape’s heritage value.

An important research angle not often included is the socio-economic relationship between the abbey and its tenants and other powers in the region. Decisions concerning the landscape were made because of the interactions between the various parties. The monks dug ditches to aid irrigation which assisted farming and ultimately secured an income for the monks and tenants. In essence the monastery had to be self-sufficient, actions were generally undertaken to ensure this. These actions must be highlighted in the evolution of the landscape because the reasons behind them are part of the intangible heritage of the landscape. Two maps help us to assess these actions and place them in the evolution of the domain; one was produced by the abbey in Venice roughly at the time of the take-over (end of the 15th century), to get an idea of where nobles owned land on the estate. The cartographer is not surprisingly anonymous. The other was copied in about 1680 by Antonio Calligaris from an unknown map for the same abbey. It is a detailed map of the amount of forest and meadows and was obviously made as a registrar of this category of land-use for the monks. Farmhouses are included with the outline of their allotted land. Due mostly to the latter map, the Mattiuzzo farm can be used to depict the Mediaeval traces in the current landscape.

Especially research on the tenants or farmers is needed but hardly ever included in research on monasteries. In NorthWestern Europe this very likely has to do with the effects of the reformation in the 16th century. Many monasteries and convents were dissolved and the farmers evicted from the land. Archives were lost or misplaced and even when found, they hardly ever contain names that can be linked to a family living in the area. This chance is greater they longer the abbey stayed active.

As Winfried Schenk said about the Cistercians (which can just as well be applied to the Benedictines) their work in the landscape which can still be identified is an important material record.

“The first step should be to point out this heritage in the landscape, the second to attach a value to it based on its documentary value, age, state of preservation or other aspects per region. In a third step its conservation and preservation should be determined and this should be constantly questioned as to its effectiveness. The goal should not be to create museum landscapes but to identify this regional heritage and to use it as potential sustainable regional development. Environmental education is closely linked to this as its only possible to protect that with which one is familiar and considers valuable.”

16 Scott, Walter, 1820, p.50.
17 ASVE (Archivio di Stato di Venezia), SGM (San Giorgio Maggiore), b. (busta = file) 80, proc. (procedure) 313 H, included in Sartor, p.141.
18 ASTV (Archivio di Stato di Treviso), Cat. (Category) mappe antiche, busta b.11.
19 Schenk, W., Novi Monasterii, p. 41.
20 Ibidem.
The challenge is to combine the traditional topics of research on monastic landscapes (acquisition and development of domain(s) with the unique attributes of the research area and its heritage value. The early history of the land (in this case its Roman past) which was donated to the monks, a case study of the history of the Mattiuzzo farm and the management of the farm by the abbey will therefore be important topics in this thesis.

1.3 Definition of problem

For the following research to be fully understood, appreciated and valuable to current and future research on monastic landscapes this question has to be answered:
What was the evolution of the domain of the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero in Monastier di Treviso from Roman times throughout the Middle Ages and of what importance is this monastic past to the current landscape's heritage?

As explained in the state of the art, research is needed and should also be focused on the tenant farmers and their importance in the heritage of the landscape. Being the most enduring element in the religious landscape they form the link between past, present and even the future which is an underestimated component in explaining the monk’s role in landscape evolution. Research in evolution of the landscape and the traces of choices made a thousand years ago in the modern landscape is of vital importance to understanding the complexities of the study of monastic landscapes.

Subquestions:

a) How was the landscape of the Veneto formed?
b) In what condition did the monks inherit the landscape?
c) What type of land was acquired by the monks?
d) How did the monks manage their donated land?
e) What were the borders of their estate and did this change over time?
f) How did they develop the landscape by way of infrastructure, water management and farms?
g) What caused the decline of the abbey, what effect did this have on the landscape and when/how did it become a holding of the abbey of the San Giorgio Maggiore abbey in Venice?
h) What are the most important remaining monastic elements in the landscape?
i) What was the importance of the farms to the abbey?
j) Of what importance are family farms with a monastic-domanial background to the history of the landscape?
k) What role can the family farm play in the preservation of the monastic landscape in the current and future cultural heritage?
### 1.4 Sources and methods

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<td>Study of secondary and primary literature&lt;br&gt;Analysis of architecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note on Table 1:
Only the main sources have been included in column 2.

**The Codex Pirensis et Praglia**
At the end of 1508 the archive of Santa Maria del Pero was moved to Venice. The monk Eusebio then began on the 26th May 1508 to keep as cellerar (cellerario) the economic affairs, sending monks where they were needed or taken important decisions and keeping track of these affairs in a chronical. Presumably it was also the task of Eusebio to make the *codex pirensis* comprising of important documents pertaining to the history and management of the abbey of Santa Maria del Pero. Important donations or selling of land are recorded both in this register kept by Eusebio and the *codex pirensis*. The latter begins with a short history of the Abbey of Santa Maria del Pero culminating in the take-over by the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice in 1493. In the codex itself however no names are mentioned as to its contributors and the hands that worked on it remain anonymous. By the 18th century the contribution of records has become sporadic. The records the codex contain mainly the important privileges the abbey gained between the 13th and 15th centuries and the donations and buying and selling of land by the monastery in the 15th and 16th centuries. It also includes a copy of the charter of the Holy Emperor Henry II (1017). From 3rd January 1572 the monk Filippo Capogrosso takes over the registry and is responsible for a separate registry recording the economic affairs of the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore. Sartor and Fr. DA Portogruaro consulted archives of notaries that recorded donations and the buying and selling of land to the abbey from the 12th to the 17th centuries. These records are held in the Venetian State archives and a complete study of them has been made between Fr. Da Portogruaro and Sartor.

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21 Sartor, I., 2010, p.118, the chronicle of Eusebio can be found in the Venetian State Archives under SGM, b.2, catastico Q.
1.5 Research approach

Period

The study of three time periods is crucial to understanding the history of the abbey’s domain and its current layout. In order to understand and gauge the effect the monks had on the surrounding landscape, the landscape that the monks were confronted with when they arrived has to be reconstructed. Other than the monks the Romans had the most effect on the landscape in terms of reclamation and lay-out of fields, canals and roads. Therefore the condition of the landscape at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire and what happened to it in the period 452-950 had to be researched by consulting the available literature. The first chapter therefore will deal with the formation of the Veneto, the decline of the Roman landscape and the first donations of land made to the monastery. The second will deal with the management and development of the land. The last chapter (Chapter 4) will deal with the Mediaeval landscape heritage of Monastier. I have chosen to focus on specific periods per chapter.

Chapter 2 will focus on the early history of the landscape, that is to say the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent invasions of barbarian tribes up to the founding of the abbey. The chapter ends with a study of the first donations by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I listed in a charter dated 1017. The emphasis is on the latter part of this period when the monks arrived to found the monastery in 958 A.D.

Chapter 3 dealing with the monastic landscape will encompass the period from 1017 until roughly 1550 A.D. The abbey is believed to have been founded in 958 A.D., by the early 1400’s however the monks had all but died out and the abbey suffered economically. The great deforestation projects of the 14th century were reversed as the forests grew in size due to the loss of inhabitants to the plagues of 1348 and 1361-63 and subsequent decline in the need of cultivated land to sustain the population. It was therefore taken over in 1493 by the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore on an island in the Venetian lagoon and monks from San Giorgio occupied the abbey of Pero. The lay-out of the modern landscape was rounded off in the renaissance of the abbey. From the 16th century the traces of these actions of the monks can be found in the current landscape. The following period is beyond the scope of this thesis and has been much discussed in Sartor’s book.

Finally chapter 4 will focus on the modern period and the current changes been made in the landscape concerning its Mediaeval heritage. It will contain a case-study of a farm located practically outside the abbey gates on the Via Casaria. The map of 1680 will be used to bridge the gap between the 16th century and the current state of the farm’s fields. It is only in the last hundred years that the Mediaeval heritage has truly been threatened in Monastier but much remains in the modern landscape. A bridge will be struck between the Middle Ages and their enduring traces in the landscape by way of studying the Mattiuzzo farm.

Research area

Chapter 2
When discussing the early landscape the limits of the research area had to be expanded to a little beyond the boundaries of the modern province of the Veneto. The area researched stretches from Treviso to Aquileia. This was done because it is important to understand the position of Monastier in the Roman sphere of influence and the Roman Empire itself to be able to understand why the Romans would colonise such a marshy piece of land. The trade routes of the province, important settlements and the lay-out of the infrastructure and the adoption of Roman culture had to be analysed. However by the end of the chapter the focus will be on the territory of the abbey.

Chapter 3
The area of study for the monastic landscape is essentially the land held by the monks at various times of the abbey's history. In general the research area is that of the area lying between the river Vallio and the river Piave. Since both rivers ran into the lagoon this forms the Eastern boundary of the research area. The Western boundary is formed by the parishes of Rovarè and Fagarè belonging to the abbey (see fig.3).

Chapter 4
For the final chapter it is important to zoom into the local level of land-use on a monastic estate, namely the farms that were held by tenants of the monks. The area of the Mattiuzzo farm forms the research area. The heritage of the Mediaeval landscape is most present in the farms, many of which are still in the exact place where they stood in the Middle Ages. The boundaries of the land the family worked are still for the most part intact.

This is certainly the case with the Mattiuzzo farm. Coupled with the family history which goes back a thousand years and explains how they first got land from the monks and are the oldest family in the territory of the monastery, the research into this farm provides an often neglected element in the study of the evolution and legacy of monastic landscapes. The research on the farms shows the importance of research on monastic landscapes for the current landscape management, especially for cultural heritage.

1.6 Thesis structure
This thesis is divided into four chapters. Excluding the introductory chapter, the first of the ‘triptych’ will deal with the early landscape of the area later belonging to the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero and in a less detailed way with the Eastern part of the Veneto. The second (chapter 3) is dedicated to the Mediaeval period of the landscape when the abbey held the land. Finally the third part (chapter 4) focuses on the heritage of the monks in the modern landscape including a case-study of the Mattiuzzo farm that once belonged to the abbey.
Chapter 2

The early landscape

Fig. 8 Artists impression of the Neolithic landscape of the Veneto. It could depict the early Middle Ages just as well as the cultivated land returned to a marshy condition. © Bevilaqua, E., 1984, p.52.

Fig. 9 Artist impression of the Roman landscape of the Veneto. © Bevilacqua, E., 1984, p.52.
2 Introduction
In this chapter the formation of the landscape of the Veneto in general and of Monastier di Treviso in particular will be examined. This will be followed by the cultivation history in the Roman period and its devolution into marsh between 400 and 800 A.D. Finally the coming of the monks and the first donation to the abbey will be discussed.

2.1 The formation and soil condition of the Veneto

The Veneto is one of the Northern most provinces of Italy. All borders of the province are formed by natural elements. To the North the river Livenza forms the border with the province Friuli-Venezia Giulia while the Adriatic and the Venetian Lagoon form its Eastern limit. Lake Garda and the Dolomites dominate the West of the Province, the river Po the South separating the Veneto from the province of Emilia-Romana. The Veneto is made up of roughly 60% plain and 40% mountains,\(^{24}\) of which the latter can be divided into 29.3% mountains and 14.3% hills which connect the mountains to the plain.\(^ {25}\)

When the ice melted at the end of the last ice age (the Devensian) the water discharged out of the Alps took with it a lot of sediments and caused great landslides in the Veneto region. This great accumulation of sediment was then transferred by the rivers Piave, Adige, Musone and Brenta down into the great plain of the Veneto. The rivers discharged the heavy sediments like gravel and bigger rocks near the top of the rivers, that is to say closer to the Alps. The finer sediments like clay and sand were carried farther down to the plain and deposited it along the way creating a build-up of sediment ranging from the high plain with its gravel and sand and permeable soils to the low plain with its fine sandy soils with silt and clay becoming more prevalent nearer the coast. The Middle Plain is characterised by gravel alternating with sand, clay and silt layers. The lower part of the plain (in which Monastier is located) is naturally prone to flooding; due to heavy rainfall the rivers burst their banks sporadically.

The large plain of the Veneto stretching from the lagoon up to the towns Treviso, Verona and Padua was formed by fluvial deposits of the rivers Brenta, Adige, Musone and the Piave. These rivers crossed the plain multiple times throughout history and occasionally flooded causing the deposit of a thick layer of fertile clay.

A sub-volcanic layer is mainly active around Padua where thermal springs are located in the Eugean hills surrounding the town. A spring belt joins the Middle and Lower parts of the plain located roughly on the level of the city of Treviso. The groundwater running out of the Alps and under the high plain surfaces in the lower plain. The area where the

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\(^{25}\) www.consiglioveneto.it (Consulted 30th October 2012).
high plain becomes the low plain is known as the 'spring belt'. The springs feed large streams and rivers like the Meolo and Vallio that run into the lagoon (see fig. 46).  

There was alluvial stability in the Iron Age and Roman periods but this changed in the 5th century when large scale flooding started to occur that has lasted until today. The former alluvial stability came to an abrupt halt with many new channels being cut by the rivers that were altering their courses. In this period the Piave cut its new bed called the Piave Vecchia on modern maps. It is believed that the Piave before this time ran into the Sile river, the Romans attributed the source of the Piave to the Sile. However by the Middle Ages the Piave occupied the Piave Vecchia and was in no way connected to the Sile river that runs through Treviso. A colder and wetter period followed that of the Roman (from 400 A.D. onwards) which brought about a great increase in the amount

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of rainfall and consequently flooding of rivers. Due to the flooding organic material trapped in low pockets in the plains close to the coast was submerged and gradually pockets of peat, fens and marsh were created. Much of these coastal marshes were not reclaimed until the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Condition of the soil in the study area**

In the area of Monastier and the surrounding Countryside the soil consists mainly of fluvial clay which has been deposited in well defined layers. These layers of clay cover a layer of sand and finely ground limestone. The soil (due to the natural characteristics of clay) does not drain well. Clay is a very impermeable substance and when wet becomes a glutinous mud which is incredibly difficult to work.

Rain water remains on the surface of the ground for a long time permeating slowly through the clay to the groundwater level which in this part of the region can always be found within a depth of 1.50 meters.

**2.2 The Roman landscape of Monastier**

The Romans referred to the North Italian plain (the Po valley which includes the Veneto) as the Cisalpina. A tribe called the Veneti occupied the area along the coast of the Venetian lagoon. Their territory stretched North to the later site of the Roman colony Aquileia. Gallic tribes occupied the other areas of the Po valley stretching from Genoa to the Lagoon including the Boii, Cenomani, Insubres and Ligures. Together with the Cenomani the Veneti allied themselves with Rome against the Gauls, and fought alongside them in the Gallic War from 225 B.C to 221 B.C. The Gauls suffered a major defeat in 222 B.C. at the battle of Clastidium but nonetheless continued to oppose the Romans.

In 218 B.C. Hannibal invaded Italy (during the second Punic War) and the Gallic tribes joined his side except for the Veneti who remained allies of the Romans throughout their conquest of the North.

At the end of the second Punic War the Romans once again turned their attention to conquering the Northern tribes, this took eleven years (201 B.C.-190 B.C.) in which time the Boii, Insubes and Cenomani were defeated. The Ligures were finally conquered halfway through the 2nd century B.C. with large numbers being deported to various parts of Italy throughout the fighting. In 187, 180 and 172 B.C. many were deported to the plains North of the river Po (Veneto and modern day Friuli Venezia). During this period the colony of Aquileia was founded in the latter province near a lagoon very similar to that of the Venetian lagoon. The area was also wooded and marshy. Rome sent her 3000 colonists, these were legion veterans. The colony was a few years old when it suffered from attacks by the hostile Istrians between 178 and 177 B.C. Nonetheless the Romans managed to defeat the hostile tribes and enslave many (in one case 5632 people) which were sold into slavery and many were sent to work on farms in the area. The colony however had suffered much and did not prosper again until after 169 B.C. when the colonists made their plight known to Rome and were supplemented with 1500 colonists and their families.

The reconstructed situation of the landscape before any major Roman influence is that of pockets of inhabitation tilling fields carved out of large forests surrounded by marshes. Strabo particularly mentions the marshes around...
Altinum. The Po Valley in general was well known to be extremely fertile soil. Vines in particular grew well in the marshes producing much fruit in a short period, however after 4-5 years the vines would die and have to be replaced.\textsuperscript{39} Wheat and barley were the main cereal crops grown in the Cisalpina region with the breeding of pigs being a speciality.\textsuperscript{40} Because of the large forests containing many oaks pigs thrived on the acorns to be found here. Polybius states that the pork produced in this region was eaten throughout Italy.\textsuperscript{41} Patavium (Padua) produced good quality wool which was used for the production of the most expensive objects. Patavium was logistically well situated on the Brenta which flowed through the town and had a port. Along with Vicentia, Verona and Tarvisium and Opitergium (modern names Vicenza, Verona, Treviso and Oderzo), it was one of the major towns of the Veneti. All five were located on the banks of rivers connecting them to the sea and therefore grew to be important trading towns. Vicentia was located between Verona in the West and Patavium in the East.

All three cities were connected by the Via Postumia which was one of the main roads of the region. The Via Postumia was built in 148 B.C. to connect the Western coast starting from Genoa to Aquileia on the Eastern coast. It connected all the main trading posts of the Cisalpine region with those of the Veneto: Verona, Patavium, Tarvi-

\textsuperscript{39} Broadhead, W., p.149.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibidem.
sium, Opitergium and Concordia. Until the Middle Ages it remained the most important road connecting these cities to the North and the important port of Aquileia. Opitergium was an important trading post. As a reward for their loyalty in battle Caesar initiated the creation of a further 300 centuries near Opitergium.\[42\] This is an important piece of information as centuriation of the area must have already commenced before this time. Situated on the main Roman road which linked Genoa to Aquileia it was not only a trading hub but an important centre of Roman influence in the area. Tarvisium (Treviso) was a centre of habitation since the end of the Bronze Age. After becoming a municipium it was second only in economical importance to Altinum.\[43\] Other than military presence the subordination of the region by the Romans is shown in judicial cases referred to Roman consuls for finality. Three documents are connected to a case referred to proconsul Lucius Caecilius Matellus Calvus concerning a disputed border between Patavium and Ateste.\[44\] Another document concerns the division between fields belonging to Vicetia and Ateste and referring to the orders of proconsul Sestus Attilius Serranus.\[45\]

Not only does this show the influence of the Romans on the judicial level but also the development of the Countryside in general. The centuriation was already completed to such an extent that the limits of a certain town's rural territory were being contested. Of greater importance to the area between the Vallio and the Piave in Roman times was the city of Altinum (Altino) which was an important port second only to Aquileia in point of maritime trade. The port of Pero was one of its most important successors. Altinum was located on the Venetian lagoon. Until recently its exact location was unknown.\[46\] The area where Altinum was situated was only drained in the 20th century which no doubt added to the late discovery even though the ruins of the city were used as a quarry during the early Middle Ages. The ancient city was found using remote sensing that mapped the moisture in the crops in 2007 during a period of drought.\[47\] The crops that grew above any foundation would have shorter roots than those that were not, using this theory satellite images mapped the moisture content of the roots. A city complete with walls, gates, a canal and roads could clearly be seen in the images. Altinum lies South-East of Monastier. In Roman times Monastier was positioned in the middle of a triangle formed by Treviso, Oderzo and Altino. In the second century A.D. commercial traffic started to decline as seen in archaeological findings linked to the development of the swamps due to changing river courses.\[48\] This caused a decline in navigability of the marshes in the third century A.D.\[49\]

The area comprising the modern provinces of the Veneto and Friuli Venezia (where Aquileia is situated) was not officially Roman but Italian since its inhabitants were not Roman citizens yet in 169 B.C. even if they were part of the Republic. The Romanisation of the region happened not by military conquest but by the adoption of the culture by the inhabitants themselves over time. This process has been termed Selbstromanisierungen and was affected by various means of contact or communication with Romans.\[50\] It has been established that there were lines of communication between the North, middle and even the South of Italy in the period of Northern conquest. Infrastructure played an important role in this, main roads, like modern highways traversed the plain in long and broad sections. The already mentioned Via Postumia was the most important link of the West with the East while the Via Annia(e) completed in 138 B.C. was the vital and direct link between Adria and Aquileia, so between the South (Rome) and the North. The Via Annia was completed in 138 B.C. stretching from Adria (a Roman colony South of the river Po) to Altinum and ultimately Concordia and Aquileia. It connected the towns of middle Italy on the Eastern coast with those of the North and so was the road most responsible for

\[42\] Ibidem, p.294.
\[43\] Ibidem, p. 282.
\[44\] http://www.archeoveneto.it/portale/?page_id=484&lang=en (consulted in October 2012).
\[45\] Ibidem.
\[46\] http://www.comune.quartodaltino.ve.it/servizi/Menu/dinamica.aspx?idArea=313&idCat=158&ID=158.
\[47\] Ninfo, A., p. 577.
\[49\] Ibidem.
\[50\] Broadhead, p. 166.
importing Roman culture and later the Christian Faith. Not forgetting that the Veneti had continuous contact with the Roman army since their alliance in 225 B.C., being their allies had earned them certain independence since they had not been conquered and forcefully subjugated to Roman rule. Also even though they became Romanised they kept parts of their culture as even today they still speak their own language known as Veneto. Next to organised colonisation, individual migration must have played a role in the inhabitation of the area. Letters home from serving legionaries, interregional commerce and the official organisation of the settlements or colonies all played a part in making the opportunities for settlement in newly conquered lands wide spread knowledge amongst all social classes.

The period of the 3rd – 1st century B.C. saw a high geographical mobility rate throughout Italy with many influx's of Romans from central Italy into the Veneto. However throughout the colonisation period the Italic people (non-Roman citizens) in the conquered territories were petitioning the Senate for Latin rights, i.e. the right of residence and the right to vote. The Senate could not come to an agreement on this request and the issue was left unsettled for years but in 89 B.C. it could be ignored no longer, after a revolt by the provincial tribes the Senate passed a law known as the Lex Pompeia granting the Cisalpine region Latin rights. However for another 40 years the inhabitants of the region were still classed as Italic peoples. This only changed in 49 B.C. when Caesar in a set of laws gave the inhabitants of Cisalpine Gaul full citizenship. The major towns of the region were made municipia (level of Roman town) and this act finalised the Romanisation of the Veneto.

The completion of the Via Claudia Augusta a century later in 46-47 A.D. was the most important development for Monastier. The traces of centuriation in Monastier (sections of identified Roman road) point to the roads being orientated on the Claudia August. This road had its origins in Altinum and from this city diagonally crossed the plain through or near Treviso and the Alps into Austria. The Via Roma in Monastier is so named because it is believed to be an old Roman road that was kept in use. The Via Casaria and Via Contarina could also have Roman origins. Roman artefacts have been found near both these roads (see fig. 13).

Roman coins have been found in the fields of the Matiuazzo farm on the Via Casaria. Part of a Roman wine press was found by the Daniel family near the Via Contarina West of the Abbey running perpendicular to the Via Roma. In Spercenigo North-East of Monastier amphora belonging to a wine cellar and funerary urns were found. Pottery fragments were found in Rovarè and a cremation grave in the area known as Villa Cucca or Ca'Lion (after the Lion family who owned a villa there) North of the abbey. In Marteggia lying South-East of the abbey a Roman well and road were discovered during an archaeological dig (2009-2011). Whilst digging a ditch to reveal the sub layers of the soil it was found that the modern road running through Marteggia (see fig. 13) was situated above a Roman road connecting it directly to the Via Annia. The later site of the abbey of Our Lady of Pero, or rather the area surrounding it, was embedded in a Roman landscape. Triangulated by three of the most important Roman cities in the Veneto (Treviso, Oderzo and Altino) it was an important farming area. Its proximity to these cities and rivers later made it an ideal supply post for

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51 Broadhead, p. 147.
52 Ibidem, p. 155.
53 Ibidem, p. 166.
55 Ibidem, p. 130.
57 Ibidem, p. 288.
the region. This is why centuries later, when nature had reclaimed great parts of the area by way of reforestation, there was still some inhabitation and a port located on the banks of the Meolo.

2.3 Decline of the Roman Landscape (452 – 774 A.D.)
Traditionally the invasion of the Goths at the beginning of the 5th century A.D. is seen as the beginning of the fall of the Roman Empire. The Goth Alaric invaded Italy in 401 A.D. and harassed the Northern provinces but was defeated in 402 A.D. at the Battle of Verona. He mounted a new campaign in 408 and marched on Rome, sacking it in 410 which lead to the recall of many legions from the Northern parts of the Empire (most notably England) to protect Italy. Since this time the Romans had to contend with barbarian invasions. The invasion of the Huns in
451 A.D. was one of the most destructive; Aquileia, Altino, and Oderzo were besieged and heavily damaged.\(^6^1\) In 452 Attila retreated back across the Alps and died the following year. The Ostrogoths took Italy under their commander Odoacer in the latter part of the 5\(^{th}\) century, Odoacer was crowned King of Italy in 474 A.D. The Gothic War of 535-554 saw the Byzantians gain ground in Italy from the Ostrogoths. The Byzantian Empire gained the Venetian Lagoon including a narrow strip of the mainland along the coast of the Lagoon. This was helped by the fact that the marshes had been rapidly developing which was already apparent in the 4\(^{th}\) century when merchants complained of increasingly difficult passage through the lagoon, marshes and even canals which were silting up.\(^6^2\) The area of Monastier experienced an expansion of the marshes at this time. The area surrounding Altino became swampy, leaving Altinum precariously situated on a peninsular in the brackish marsh.\(^6^3\) This natural growth of the marshlands however was not enough to explain the decline of the Roman landscape of Monastier, although this natural phenomenon coupled with the depopulation by the Byzantian-Goth War must have had its effect. The answer can be found in the most common element in the landscape: water. Flooding is the age old problem of the region and rivers frequently burst their banks. This problem can be seen in geomorphological studies of the region in which it has been concluded that between the 5\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) centuries there was a significant amount of flooding of the lower plain (see ch. 2.1). However there was also mention of these catastrophes for the landscape in primary sources. The Benedictine monk Paul, called The Deacon (Paulus Diaconus in Latin) wrote a history of his race, the Langobards in the latter part of the 8\(^{th}\) century. He recorded a flood which took place in the time of the Pope and Saint Gregory the Great in the 6\(^{th}\) century. On the 16\(^{th}\) October 589 A.D. after prolonged rainfall there was an inundation which caused the bursting of the banks of several rivers that not only engulfed much of the Veneto but also Liguria (Genoese coast) and Rome itself.\(^6^4\) Paul specifically mentions the Adige that runs through Verona. What makes the passage so interesting is the direct result of the flood on the landscape:

“Ruins were made of estates and Country seats and at the same time a great destruction of men and animals. The paths were obliterated, the highways demolished”\(^6^5\)

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61 www.archeoveneto.it (including the rest of the paragraph, consulted 11\(^{th}\) April 2012).
63 Ibidem.
64 Foulke, W.D., History of the Langobards by Paul the Deacon, 1907, p.126.
65 Ibidem, p. 126.
Of damage done to the city of Verona by the waters of the Adige Paul writes:

"The river Athesis (Adige) then rose so high that around the church of the blessed martyr Zeno, which is situated outside the walls of the city of Verona, the water reached the upper windows....Likewise the walls of the city of Verona itself were partly demolished by the same inundation."66

The same could have been written for the river Piave except that no town like Verona was situated directly on this river. Instead the important bridges would have been destroyed or at least badly damaged. The highways most affected by the loss of these bridges would have been the Via Annia and the Via Postumia. It is believed that at this time because of this inundation many rivers in the Veneto shifted their courses. The area of Monastier does not only border on the Piave but the spring fed Meolo and Vallio cross the territory creating thin strips of land between each watercourse. Any major flood would have caused much damage to the fields and roads.

In addition to the expansion of marshes and the decay of the infrastructure vast portions of Eastern Veneto were reforested, mostly by oak trees. Nature regained a strong foothold in the region although all human habitation was not driven out. However mid 7th century there was already a split between the Langobard held towns and the Venetian Islands in the lagoon which were part of the Byzantine Empire. A long strip of coast along the lagoon including the Roman town of Altino formed a buffer region between the Langobard Kingdom and the

Oderzo was the only city that the Byzantians managed to hang on to but it eventually fell in 669 A.D., civil servants moved to Cittanova (Eraclea) on the coast of the lagoon and the Archbishop followed. At roughly the same time the Archbishop of Altino moved to the island of Torcello which lies just off the mainland South-East of Altino. Here he had his new palace built and probably due to the growth and importance of this religious site Venice started to develop in this period. Many people came to live on the islands in the lagoon seeking refuge from the wars on the mainland.

The Langobards had divided their kingdom into dukedoms and were ruled by a King. Much pressure was brought to bear on the King by his dukes to expand his Kingdom in Italy. Therefore between the 7th and 8th century the kings continuously tried to expand their territory by attacking land held by the Papacy. This ardent desire eventually waned especially with their last great king Liutprand in the 8th century who was a devout Catholic and was totally subordinate to the Pope. When he died in 744 A.D. his successor Hildeprand was crowned but deposed after a very short rule and Ratchis, duke of Friuli, chosen by the nobles as king. The want for more territory had reared its head again more eager than before but even Ratchis proved too subservient to the Pope so his brother Aistulf was crowned king. When he died in 756 A.D. Desiderius, duke of Tuscia, claimed the throne. When he invaded the territories of Ravenna and Rome sometime between 771 and 774, Pope Hadrian asked Charlemagne, king of the Franks, for help. Charlemagne crossed the Alps and laid siege to Pavia, the capital of the Langobards. The city fell in June 774 A.D. and the Langobard Kingdom became part of the Carolingian Empire.

Eventually -but not surprisingly- many factors led to the decline of the Roman landscape. There was the demographic dip starting at the end of the Roman Empire in the 5th century due to the invasions of the Barbarian tribes and the migration of people to the islands in the lagoon. Climate change caused colder weather, the growth of marshes along the coast of the lagoon and more rainfall which in turn caused flooding. The infrastructure suffered greatly but more than that the demographic decline caused the reduction of agriculture in the plain and allowed reforestation of large parts of the coastal region. One can only imagine that this confluence of problems and changes led to a precarious economic and social situation in the Veneto that was left to the Holy Roman Emperor and ultimately the monks to rehabilitate.

### 2.4 Coming of the monks (958 A.D.)

In 800 Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome by the Pope. The region now referred to as the Veneto was called the Trevigian March (named after the city of Treviso). The march was a border frontier between the Carolingian and Byzantian Empires with Venice situated in the border region of the Byzantian Empire. The Doge, whilst owing allegiance to the Byzantian Emperor, enjoyed a rather autonomous rule of the city.

The rising power of Venice as a trade station in the

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67 www.archeoveneto.it (Consulted 12th April 2012).
68 Ibidem.
69 Foulke, W. D., 1907, p. 313.
70 Ibidem, p. 313.
72 Ibidem, p. 1505.
Adriatic had a direct influence on the mainland as Venice was dependant on raw materials such as wood with which to build houses and ships. The latter were crucial to the trade with Arab and Greek merchants for spices and other commodities. An important trade product used for this purpose was salt that the Venetians claimed from the salt marshes in the lagoon and almost had a monopoly on it throughout the Middle Ages. For this reason by 880 there was a port on the Meolo (see ch. 1.1) which could readily supply Venice with trade goods and thereby generate income for the Patriarch.

The most important trade good would have been lumber which was abundantly present in the area of Monastier and the mainland in general. Wood was needed by the Venetians as building material since brick was too heavy for the soil on the islands, it would sink unless it rested on wooden poles hammered into the stable sand layer of the lagoon. This only happened on a wide scale during the Renaissance, in the Middle Ages only the important buildings were built out of brick like the basilica on Torcello built in the 7th century. Large sections of the mainland were covered in forest which was important as fuel and building material for the Venetians living on islands in the lagoon. However, this territory belonged to the Patriarch and wood had to be traded. Not surprisingly there was much strife between the Doge and the Patriarch and ports were raided along the rivers by the Venetians (see ch. 1.1).

Even as peace was made between the Doge and the Patriarch, Magyar raiders were penetrating into the Veneto bent on pillage. These raids carried on into the 10th century. By this time Otto I (912-973) was Holy Roman Emperor and he wanted this territory stabilised, held down by people he could trust. A very effective way of accomplishing this was to found monasteries and grant them the land so that they could hold it for him rather than a secular lord. Settlers would then come and farm the land for the monks, thereby creating a stable economy and agricultural society. The monks were under direct protection of the Emperor, anyone attacking it could expect to be heavily fined and even attacked by the imperial army. This was an effective way to stop marauders and warring families in the Middle Ages.

It is in the light of this frontier management of Otto I that we must see the founding of the Abbey of Pero. It formed part of a monastery building campaign carried out in the regions of the Veneto and Friuli Venezia. Two others are the monastery Santa Maria di Mogliano (South-East of Treviso) in 997 A.D. and Sesto al Reghena in the 9th century in Friuli Venezia.

### 2.5 The first donations 1017 A.D.

The original charter concerning the donations to the monastery has not survived. Instead we have to rely on a document based on the original drawn up by Henry II in 1017 A.D in which he confirms the donations made to the monastery by his predecessor. Along with the donations the privileges of the monastery were noted, chief among these the fact that the monastery would be under direct protection of the Emperor. As far as settlements, churches and parishes went the monastery

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73 Crouzet-Pavan, E., 2002, p.94.
74 Bussi, R., p. 30.
75 Sartor, I., p.40.
76 Uytterhoeven, J., p. 8.
77 Sartor, I., p. 40.
79 Codex Pirensis, f. 31.
was granted the village of San Paolo and the chapel of San Martino, the whereabouts of which remain uncertain but a probable identification is that of the church of San Martino in Colle (in the hills) which the Patriarch also owned at the time of the grant in 958 (see fig. 19). San Paolo has been identified as the current village of San Polo di Piave. The village was situated near the Via Postumia and located on the Via Ungaresca, so named because the Magyars had used it to raid the area between 899-922 A.D.

In fact this may be why the grant was termed generous by Henry II, not only because the monastery now owned the port and all its rights, privileges and revenues but also owned farms on the already cultivated side of the Piave (near San Polo di Piave known as San Polo di Patriarca in this period).

The Patriarch was very interested in this area because of its access to good roads that connected it to Oderzo which had by this time become an important trading town once again. San Polo di Piave and the chapel of San Martino most likely reverted to the control of the Patriarch in the early 13th century (see ch. 3.1) as they are not mentioned as parishes of the monastery in the Codex.

Concerning the other donations the document stipulates: the farms “mansis” (each farm supported a family of settlers), houses, lands, vineyards, meadows, pastures, woods, hunting rights, fisheries, mills, roads (including untraversable roads) “vijis et invijs” and the income and revenues of the grants.

Two important points can be concluded from the list of donations, A: the region was already being cultivated to quite an extant by the monks. B: the area still suffered from the devastating flood and development of the marsh, i.e. the untraversable roads. These were probably old Roman field roads that had become impassable due to the expansion of the marsh and forests or natural decay, not having being maintained. The most important

80 Sartor, I. p.42.
81 Ibidem.
84 Ibidem.
85 Codex Pirensis, ff. 31-31 v.
Roman highway near the monastery (the Via Annia) was also for a great part overgrown by forest and overrun by marsh. The Via Postumia had been one of the two important roads crossing the Piave in Roman times. When the crossings were destroyed (probably by the flood in 589) the roads still served the areas on either side of the river linking them to the main cities of the region. The two most important crossing points of the Piave became that of the Via Ungaresca (see fig. 19) and the Ponte di Piave. Later because this had become too impassable the monks working together with the City of Treviso organised the construction of the Call’alta road which crossed the Piave at Ponte di Piave (see ch. 3.3).

Taking advantage of this development on the site of the port of Pero the Patriarch had a total of twenty shops built on the banks of the river Meolo and on the square of the basilica in Aquileia in 1031 as part of an investment program. The revenues of the shops was bequeathed to the canons of the basilica in Aquileia. This shows a blossoming trade on the banks of the Meolo at this time and the continuation of a commercial tradition in this part of the province.

Together with the confirmation of the grants Henry II upheld the protection afforded the abbey by Otto I. A “severe penalty” would be levied on “those who would dare to harass the Abbot and possessions of the Abbey”. This fine consisted of 100 pounds of gold to be divided in half between the abbey and the imperial crown. The attacks of the Huns at the time of the foundation are thought to be the reason for its incorporation in the grant. The monastery of San Giorgio del Pineto (original site unknown but definitely located in the province) had been destroyed in the early 900’s and the monks relocated to the lagoon. Although the raids of the Magyars (called Huns and Barbarians in local history) were at their height in the period 899-922 they still sporadically raided the area until the late 10th century. In fact the lack of early documentation on the abbey has been attributed to the burning of the monastery by the Huns shortly after its foundation.

86 Ibidem note 54.
87 Passolunghi, P. A., 1982, p.44.
89 Ibidem, p.12.
Chapter 3

The Medieval landscape of the Abbey of Santa Maria del Pero (Our Lady of Pero) in Monastier

Fig. 20 The Basilica in Acquileia, seat of the Patriarch under whose jurisdiction the abbey of Our Lady of Pero fell during the Middle Ages. Photo taken by author in October 2012.
3 Introduction
The Mediaeval landscape of Monastier di treviso and surrounding territory stretching to the Piave in the North, the Venetian lagoon in the East and the Vallio river in the South and Callalta road (main road between Treviso and Oderzo) in the West will be examined in this chapter. This was the territory the abbey held from the (High) Middle Ages up until its dissolution by Napoleon. The main focus will be on the reconstruction of the borders of its demesnes and cultivation history using maps and toponyms. As the final subchapter the salvaging of the monastic landscape by the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore will be examined based on a contract made with the tenants in 1559.

3.1 Borders of the monastic domain and its parishes

In 1017 the borders of the monastic domain were formed by the rivers Pero and Vallio, although not all the land was included in this donation as we find local landowners continuously donating land to the abbey throughout the 12th and 13th centuries. Later donations occur from time to time but never match the importance of the first. After the local donations the most important grant of land is that made by the noble Ezzelino II da Romano who was also the Podesta of Treviso. The same Ezzelino II da Romano grants the abbey on 13th March 1200 the rights and privileges to the entire area between the rivers Vallio and Piave, thus greatly extending the domain of the abbey.

This land had been under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch but Ezzelino had conquered it in the course of the latter part of the 12th century and now owned practically all the Trevigian March. The monastery like many other nobles of the march held the land as a fief [for] from Da Romano. In 1223 Ezzelino II da Romano enters the

Fig. 21 Territory of the abbey of Our Lady of Pero (map by author).
monastery of Oliera and devides his territory between his two sons Ezzelino III (the tyrant) and Alberico, who inherits the Trevisian March.

In 1253 Alberico da Romano (son of Ezzelino II), possibly as an act of compensation, grants the Patriarch Gregorio da Montelongo of Aquileia the town Medade with its castle and court and the localities named Angaran, Carpenedo, Gonfo, Pralongo, Ansom (possibly Zenson), Meolo and the small town of Croce. However Alberico is excommunicated in 1257 and in 1260 incarcerated in Castello di Zenone with the rest of his family. In the dispute that followed between the interested parties it was eventually decided that the land would be handed over to the Commune of Treviso instead of the Patriarch. The Patriarch would fight this decision until the invasion and conquering of the Veneto by the Venetians in 1338.

Abbey of Our Lady of Pero

The church belonging to the the abbey was first dedicated to Saint Peter, hence the abbey was known as Abbazia di San Petro. It was rededicated to Our Lady of the assumption in the middle of the 12th century when it was made an abbey. San Pietro Novello refers to the new church the monks had built a few hundred meters behind the abbey on the opposite bank of the Meolo. San Pietro Novello refers to land newly reclaimed by the monks. The church was restored in the beginning of the 14th century and again in 1497 when it came under the jurisdiction of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

Churches of Meolo and Vallio

Although the churches of Meolo and Vallio served the inhabitants of the area belonging to the abbey these churches fell under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Treviso and not the Abbey. The church of Meolo was dedicated to Saint John the Baptist (San Giovanni Batista) and that of Vallio to Saint Nicholas (San Nicolo).

Sant’Andrea (St Andrew) di Barbarana

During the Middle Ages the village of Sant’Andrea di Barbarana was located in a bend of the Piave close to the current village of Ponte di Piave. In 1525 the Piave shifted its course and Sant’ Andrea was now marooned on an island in the middle of an oxbow lake. The village was moved to the opposite bank (on the side of the abbey) a little downstream. The last part of the name: ‘di Barbarana’ was given to the village because the barbarian tribes Goths, Huns and Langobards used this crossing or according to chronicles were known to have been in this area.

Fossalta di Piave Church of Saint Hermacore and Fortunato

Mentioned in a document dated 1070 when Domenico Stornato bequeaths the church of St Hermacore and Fortunato a portion of his income. It was referred to as Campolongo (long fields) di Fovea Alta (high ditch) since this time and mentioned in anoth-

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90 Da Portogruaro, 1948, p.31.
92 Sartor, I., 2010, p.28.
93 Cornaro, F., 1758, p.258.
er document of 1191. In 1494 Fossa Alta gained the new name of Fossalta Plavis (Fossalta di Piave).

Zenson di Piave
The town of Zenson di Piave is located on the banks of the Piave river downstream of Ponte di Piave. Since the Middle Ages it was an important point of trade for the abbey on this river. The name of the town is derived from the Christian name Gentio(s) or Zenso in Veneto. The church is dedicated to San Benedetto which testifies to the monastic ties with the parish.

San Mauro of Rovarè and San Lorenzo of Pradancino
The village of Rovarè is located North-West of the abbey on the Via Roma. The parish of Rovarè was the only parish which had two churches in the Middle Ages, that of San Mauro and San Lorenzo of which the latter was the oldest. The church of San Lorenzo is well known since the early Middle Ages because of the fair held here dedicated to its patron saint. The fair was held every year since this time on the second Monday of August until the early 20th century. The rights to the fair were granted to the monastery of San Teonisto (monastery in Treviso) by the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad in 1037. The rights involved levying tax for the needs of the monastery. Rovare is derived from the Italian Roveredo meaning oak forest that stood here in the Middle Ages. The monks had to carry out deforestation here before the village of Rovare could develop. Pradancino or Riva di Pradancino is the name given to the area surrounding the church of San Lorenzo. It means bank of the Preda or Breda which was commonly referred to as the Preda Piccolini? (little Preda). Preda/Breda derived from the Latin præedia meaning estate or domain.

The borders of this Riva di Pradancino are the ditch Preda and the river Meolo. However, this name also became associated with the banks of the Meolo North of Rovarè. It is possible that the river or ditch Preda used to be connected to the Meolo. One of the old meanders of the Meolo, later used as a ditch when an oxbow lake was formed, runs very close to where the Preda begins (see fig. 21). The church of San Lorenzo was destroyed in the early 18th century.

San Marco Fagarè
Fagarè is derived from the Latin fagaretum (the Latin for beech is fagus) meaning beech forest. In the early medieval period two castles were built by the Bishop of Treviso, who had obtained this land as a gift by the rulers of the Lombards, in the neighbourhood

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96 Sartor, I., 2010, p.199.
98 Sartor, I., 2010, p.175.
100 Gambarotto, S., 2003, p.7.
of Fagarè. The names of both point to the hills in the area. One was called the Fortress of Rocca – rock- and the other Castello Colle (Hill Castle). Both were destroyed in the wars between the municipality of Treviso, the bishop of Treviso, the Patriarch, the Ezzelini and the Della Scala families that raged before 1339 when the Venetian Republic conquered the Veneto.101

San Biagio di Callalta
This parish was located North-West of the Abbey beyond Rovarè on the main road, the Callalta, between Treviso and Oderzo. Before the replacement of the old road to Oderzo vi Ponte di Piave in 1314 the village of San Biagio was known as Cavriè. It still exists near the village of Pero. In 1314 a new village was founded on the new route that now ran straight to Oderzo passing just South of Villa Cucca.

The new road was called the Callalta. Call is the Veneto word for way and alta means high, the new road was literally the highway between Treviso and Oderzo (see ch. 3.3). Caurillium (also spelt Caurille, Caprile and Capreolae) is thought to be derived from the latin capra for goat (Capreolus = wild goat) is thought to refer to the closures for goats that once existed here. The new church was dedicated to St Blaise (San Biagio) and in the fourteenth century San Biagio is also referred to as Cornudella pointing to a bifurcation of the road that resembled a horn, hence the name (Cornu means horn).102 From 1381 onwards the town is referred to as San Biagio di Callalta.103

3.2 Acquisition and management of land

After the charter of Emperor Henry II in 1017 there follows a period in which no documents can be found that refer to the abbey. This period lasts until 1132. The monks were most likely engaged in cultivating the land by the time the first private donation of land was made. The first mention of the monastery in the 12th century is made in two papal bulls.

The first dated 29th June 1132 issued by Pope Innocent II (1131-1161) Counts the monastery of Pero as one of six active in the region of the lower Venetian plain.104 The second dated 7th June 1145 issued by Pope Eugene III wishes to attract the attention of the canons of Treviso to the obligation, previously established by the Apostolic See, not to demand tithes on goods that the monks cultivated with their work and with their own hands or at their own expense.105

The document, preserved in original, specifies that the dispute was about a new (novali) assarting project by the monks. This new land projects gave its name to the area of San Pietro North of the abbey across the Meolo (see figure 3.3).106

Certainly their presence was already known by Gerarda del fu Zigenulfo who in his will dated 3rd March 1167 leaves (by consent of his wife Verelda) the abbey a plot of land in the city of Treviso in the area of the ‘ponte della pietra’ or stone bridge. This bridge spanned the river Botteniga also known as the Canang, one of the two rivers that flow through the town, the other is the river Sile. The house -with land- located near the stone bridge bordered on one side with the other properties of the donor, on the other side with the public road, on the third side with property belonging to Giovanni di Girardo, with the river (Canang) forming the border on the fourth and last side.107

105 Da Portogruaro, D., 1948, p. 22.
This is one of the few donations that are situated in a town and also the furthest away from the abbey. What the monks used the land for is not known as it does not appear in any known documents since the donation. The next donation mentioned is that of the 18th April 1172 and involves belonging to a certain Olivier di Medade (from Medade, modern day Losson situated some kilometres to the East of the village of Meolo). Olivier cedes all his rights to the forest of Vallio (Silva di Vallio), the Frassenedo marshes (Frassenedo paludi) and a farm in Roveredeno (modern Rovarè). The property was located in an ash forest (Frassenedo means ash). It was also marshy. Ash was useful as fuel, building material and produced good foliage for feeding the animals. The same name (Frassenedo) is used for an area East of Padua in the early Middle Ages. Later the name disappeared from the records, no doubt due to the deforestation and assarting of the area, where later there is talk of farms and closures.  

Olivier must have been a large landholder in the area as on 11th January 1196 he sells the abbot all his land in the locality which extends between San Pietro Novello and the monastery. Part of the land sold to the monastery in 1196 was rented to Martin Das on the 15th October 1346, it was by then known as Pra Maggiore, meaning larger or greater meadow. Pra is an abbreviation of Prato, meaning meadow. This land formerly belonged to the tenant Alberto da Polcenigo.

Evidently this growth of the monastery’s lands and evolving power in the area alarmed the Patriarch to such an extent that Pope Alexander III published a bull on the 7th July 1176 in which he reaffirms the rights and privileges of the Patriarch concerning the 20 shops along the banks of the river Pero (see ch. 2.4).

Another piece of land in this vicinity was granted to the monastery on 17th April 1190 by Ezzelino II da Romano, a wealthy nobleman and owner of much land in the Veneto; he was also the podesta or chief magistrate of Treviso. The document states that the land lay in Villanova by which San Pietro Novello is meant in Castelmedeade (Losson). In 1192 an inhabitant of this same village—Ussinello da Medade—sold the monastery all the land he possessed in the locality known as Gonfo, which lay on the banks of the river Piave.

In 1200 Ezzelino II da Romano grants the land between the Meolo and Pivae rivers to the Abbey of Pero. This grant will be contested by the Patriarch until 1332 when the case is decided in favour of the city of Treviso and the Abbey of Pero.

Although donations to the abbey continued until at least 1299, the period after the grant of 1200 by Ezzelino II da Romano is mainly documented through documents pertaining to the renting out or selling of the land. So we find on the 12th August 1212 the abbey drawing up a rent contract (through a notary) with Pietro Pinzo that he rents land in the locality known as Villorba, roughly encompassing the land between the Via Roma and the Vallio river to the South-West of the monastery including the Fossa Bruna. The fields involved were 2 campi between the Fossabruna and Vallio and an unstated amount of land in Villa Nova (San Pietro Novello), Alenzo, Usolela. The whole was granted to Pietro for 450 libra (from which lire is derived), however tithes were also levied.

Alberico in this year begins a campaign of selling land belonging to the abbey. On the 12th March 1223 Romano sells Zuane di liborio 2 farms in Rovere for 100 [libra]. On 9th August 1223 Romano sells for 600 [libra] 2 farms with plowed and wooded fields amounting to 14 campi to Giacomo de Turco and Zuane di Liborio, land that actually belonged to Al[d]b?erico da Medade and the monks, located near the end of the river Zenson. However, due to the infamy of the fights being waged by Alberico the men of Cavrie declare to the podesta of Treviso on 12th July 1223 that after the damage done to a forest owned by them they will be handing it over to the monks of Pero. This concerns land in Levada between Pudisia and Villa Cuccha. This spate of land selling ends in 1225 when Alberico sells Simone d’Amizzo a farm located in Pralongo for 220 libra.

The last contract of the 13th century deals with 14 campi of land granted to a certain Giacomello in Villorba on 108 http://www.padovanet.it/dettaglio.jsp?id=5154 (Consulted 9th March 2013).
When a comparison is made between the (place) names mentioned in the chronicle and deeds and the locality of the acquisition a reconstruction can be made of where the monks first started to reclaim the land (see figures 25 and 26). The very use of the word reclaim here shows that just by looking at the names the assumption can be made that nearly all the area had to be assarted in order for cultivation of crops to commence.

Besides the great amount of forest large swathes of marsh punctuated the woodland. These began in the area called Paludi di Frassalongo. The name not only points to a march being located here but also to the fact that it was an Ash marsh. In fact many of the names of the areas or villages on this monastic property point directly to the species of tree that most commonly grew there. Other examples are Rovarè and Olmi near Treviso, respectively meaning Oak forest and Elms.

The majority of the donators live in the South near the ancient Via Annie road but the land they donate is near the current site of the abbey, near the Meolo. The two most mentioned villages being Medade and Marteggia. This could mean that of the two areas that furthest away from the lagoon was more marshy.

This could also point to this area being the longest inhabited or indeed the most habitable place in the area which is quite interesting considering that Attila came so close to this region. However, if at this stage the Via Annia was at least partially intact it would make sense.

The end of the 13th century and first half of the 14th century were marked by extreme floods and outbreaks of plague in the area of the Piave (see table 2). Especially the plague of 1348 crippled the region with large losses of life. Another plague epidemic followed in 1361-1363.

The monks at the beginning of the 14th century started major deforestation projects on their lands. It seems that the monks were combating the loss of revenue by selling woodland or timber. Therefore on the 30th April 1308 the abbot Benedetto sells Giovanni di Franchi the 20 campi worth of tree trunks from the forest of Vallio (donated in 1172) for 120 libra. In 1322 timber from a wood in Santa Maria del Pero was sold to Lazzaro da Cornudella for 20 libra and 100 campi worth of timber from the wood Palude (marsh) was sold to Pietro Ceclario on 2nd August 1343. Three years later (1346) 14 campi worth of timber from a forest located in Villorba was sold for 82 libra. Unlike the other contracts the monks stipulated in this transaction the exact location and borders of the forest: where the Fossabruna begins to the head of the Palombo di frassenedo or Villa Cucca.

There were also a number of contracted rents in this period which interestingly contain both cash and livestock. No mention is made of tithes, these were very probably still paid by old tenants. The contracts mainly deal with small pieces of meadow or woodland. Starting on the 5 June 1320 a piece of woodland is rented out for 20 [libra] per year located in Gonfo which is bordered by the forest of Angarono, Palu(do) largo, Peschiera Fossa and

Fig. 24 The marsh of Onara near Padua gives us a good example of what the original landscape must have looked like in the area of Monastier near the lagoon. © http://www.magicovenezia.it/padovano/tergola/PaludeOnara-1.htm.

Sartor, I., 2010, p.56.
Fig. 25 Toponyms used by the monks when referring to locations on their property. © Google maps (markings by author).

Fig 26 Translation of the names in fig. 25. © Scribble Maps.
Fossalta. In the following year, on 14th April 1321, Giovanni da Spercenigo rents a meadow for an annual fee of 5 libra and two goats. Not far from the abbey in a location known as Riva di Predancino (on the banks of the Pre-da) on the 26th September 1327 the abbot rents out land which is divided between meadow and woodland to the priest Bartolo (serving the parish of Rovare) for 20 solidi and two hens.

In the same year another meadow is rented out, namely that of Barcon located between Perodola, the village of Pero and the Callalta road to Antonio da Narbon for the exotic price of 9 lire di piccoli two pounds of pepper and two goats. Lire di piccoli was a currency of Venice during the Renaissance, there were 240 pennies to the lira di piccoli and 26 lira di piccoli to the lire grosso.\(^{110}\)

The large scale selling of timber and renting out of woodland in the 14th century could not stop the decline of the economic situation of the abbey. Floods and plague had harassed the area, leaving farms un-worked and many probably under-staffed. During the plague epidemic of 1348-1359 Venice experienced the worst occurrence of the plague in 1348. The mainland was just as badly affected. By the end of the 14th century the land in Villa Cucca and Riva di Predancino was termed “uncultivated, barren and poorly worked”.\(^{111}\)

In 1390 a contract was made between the abbey and the Venetian noble Nicolo Morosini. This push to start renting to nobles may have been caused by the fact that a famine occurred in exactly the same year (see table 2). Taken by itself this would probably not have been enough for the abbot to make such a decision but looking at the great amount of flooding, extreme weather and plagues (1348 and 1361-1363) the losses to the abbey, both in manpower and profit, have been to great, necessitating this action.

According to local accounts two thirds of the population of the Veneto died in 1348. At any rate, the loss of life would have put extra strain on the monks to keep up the productivity of the farms.

The property mentioned in the contract was rented to Morosini for 20 ducati on which he was allowed to build any number of houses at will. The abbot Giovanni Vitturi, who was responsible for this transaction, hereby initiated a policy of saving the abbey by renting or selling land to Venetian nobles that would continue for at least two more centuries.

His successor, who took over the abbey in 1421, Marco Barozzi, followed the same policy by approaching Venetian patricians in the hope that they would be interested in renting land and in so doing shrewdly tightening economic relations with them. He also initiated what seems to be a 5 year rent period called a quinquennio.

In 1427 this contract period is first mentioned when Francesco di Villa del Bosco rents seven farms in Villa Cucca.\(^{112}\)

In the same year other land in Villa Cucca is granted to the notary and citizen of Treviso, Mauro Bernardo da Feletto, for a fee of eleven ducats and two capons to be paid every year on Saint Martin’s feastday (11 November), with the obligation to invest at least 100 ducats in buildings within five years. Even following this commendable policy Barozzi was not able to save the failing profits of the abbey and by 1449 the abbey was suffering both an economical collapse and a vocational crisis.


\(^{111}\) Sartor, I., 2010, p.93.

\(^{112}\) Sartor, I., 2010, p.121.
3.3 Development of domain

Infrastructure

It is not surprising that in an area covered in marsh and forest the rivers formed the main methods of transport. The rivers however only ran West-East, just as in Roman times the main roads ran North-South or North-East-SouthWest linking the main cities. For the abbey of Santa Maria di Pero the route of main importance was that of the road linking Treviso and Oderzo, two main market cities. To do this the road had to cross the Piave at an unmistakable point called Ponte di Piave. A bridge already existed here in 1269, it was also built under the auspices of Treviso. It was a wooden bridge, the use of the wood was documented 12 years later in 1281. The wood came from the forest of Subarzone, a name derived from the fact that it must have been South of a levee, probably of the Piave. This Mediaeval levee is difficult to place as this is the only name hinting at its existence. The borders of this wood were stipulated in the document as being marsh

Fig. 27 Map of the research area showing most important infrastructural developments. © Google maps.

## Environmental and epidemic record of the Veneto during the Middle Ages and Renaissance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of event</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1084</td>
<td>Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110</td>
<td>Flood</td>
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<tr>
<td>1117</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
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<tr>
<td>1128</td>
<td>Earthquake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1226</td>
<td>Drought causes the burning of many crops and death of cattle due to loss of hay</td>
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<tr>
<td>1234</td>
<td>Frost dries out many vines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Flood of the Piave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1269</td>
<td>Famine caused by poor agricultural year, and earthquake</td>
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<tr>
<td>1276</td>
<td>Flood and severe winter</td>
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<td>Famine caused by poor agricultural year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1304</td>
<td>Flood</td>
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<tr>
<td>1314</td>
<td>Heavy flooding of the Piave in the previous autumn is the cause of a terrible famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1317</td>
<td>Flood and earthquake</td>
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<tr>
<td>1318</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1318-19</td>
<td>Extreme winter caused the rivers to freeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1343</td>
<td>Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1347</td>
<td>Famine caused by a poor agricultural year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348</td>
<td>Worst plague ever to hit the province. Venice especially was badly affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1359</td>
<td>In January there is so much snow fall that the oxen cannot pull the wagons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1361-1363</td>
<td>A plague nearly equal to that of 1348.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1368</td>
<td>Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1372</td>
<td>Outbreak of plague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1383</td>
<td>Flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1390</td>
<td>Famine due to bad year for crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Outbreak of plague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1486/89</td>
<td>Outbreak of plague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1490</td>
<td>A winter so severe that the Piave and the Lagoon freeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1502</td>
<td>Plague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1506</td>
<td>Flooding of the Piave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1525*</td>
<td>Piave shifts its course near Ponte di Piave causing an oxbow lake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Based on Sartor, I., 2010, p. 191 and Dariol, C., Storia di Croce - volume I, 2008 (see for the latter: http://www.elevamentealcubo.it/Crocedipiave/StoriadeCrose0-1290.htm).
Fig. 28 Detail of the map by Cristoforo Sabbadino in 1557 of the rivers and canals in the Veneto. © Busano, M., Forma urbis terra, Oderzo, p.16 (original held by the Venetian Archives, S.E.A. Piave, n.5). The red circle marks the location of the oxbow lake and the location of Sant Andrea di Barbaran up until 1525. The green arrow points to the levee that appears as a line running the length of the Piave.
to the East and South, the Tagladela or artificial canal (Tagliata) to the West and by property belonging to the municipality of Treviso in the North. The Heads of Zenson and Ponte di Piave were commissioned to provide contribution for the construction of the bridge and for its maintenance. The abbey made a profit from the toll levied from traders crossing the bridge. A guard tower was situated near the bridge prompting the name Tor(re) del Ponte. The abbey profited this way from the trade between Treviso and Oderzo.

The road in the early Middle Ages seems to have been a winding one linking the farms and small villages in the North-Western corner of the monastic property (near the current Sant'Andrea di Barbaran). Callalta means high-way and is formed by the Venetian word for way (Call) and alta meaning high. It was constructed in 1314 by the command of the municipality of Treviso to improve the connection between Treviso and Oderzo across the Piave. The main road connecting the abbey to the parish of Rovarè in the West and ultimately Fossalta di Piave in the East is the Via Roma. This was not the medieval name of the road as in the 1600’s it was only known like the other roads in the territory as a strada communale or communal road. The only road to have a name that was documented in the Middle Ages was the Callalta.

Farms and Fields

Reclamation patterns show that the area of the marsh became worse towards the West. There must have been more swamp than forest here as the field system follows that of a wetland landscape. This means that the system of strip-fields was used in this area in which the fields of each farm border on each other from front to back and run back from the farm to the drainage ditch in one long line. In fact the name of this area on the 1680’s map is Campolongo (long fields). The farmhouses are positioned very close together along a road. The fields of one farm show the orientation of the reclamation being based on the waterways or ditches in the area. These ditches seem to be canalised branches of the Meolo or of narrow rivers.

Reclamation is clearly demarcated by the water channels in the area. Rivers and ditches formed the axes of the reclamation projects clearly seen on air photography and satellite images (see fig. 29 ). The region West of these fields follows the same practical naming pattern, namely that of Pralongo.

The ditch known as Correggio (corrected) meanders and because of its location appears to have been a branch of the Meolo or Preda rivers at one point. The abbey in this case did not set about canalising it but even exaggerated the meanders a little (hence the name Correggio). This was probably done to enhance its water carrying capacity as the area was prone to flooding. The amplification of area for meadows because of the amount of bank amplified by the meanders could also have been a reason. The monks designated the banks along these meanders as the commons for their tenants. The name of these area points directly to this fact. It is called Pralongo, being a combination of the two words Pradi and longo meaning long meadows (see fig. 38).

The fields in the area of Rovarè and the Frassalongo marshes seem to point to an open field system. Where the abbey kept lots of woodland the system of enclosures dominated as we see in the use of the term Clausure (enclosure) such as in the area of Croce.

The area between meanders was very often used as ideal place to maintain a forest, this can be identified by the toponym Gonfo pointing to a forest in this area. On modern maps an area called Gonfo can be found near the village of Vallio where presumably the ancient forest of Vallio was located.

114 Ibidem.
115 Da Portogruaro, D, 1948, p.60.
Concerning the borders of farms and fields there are two maps, both very accurate, that give an idea of what the landscape looked like at the end of the 15th century and in 1680. When the maps (or parts of the maps) are compared to satellite images of the same area barely any difference can be made out. At least the areas are very easily identified because of the rivers and buildings which still stand on exactly the same spot, although this is not always the case. As an introduction to the area and to the further use of the 1680’s map in the rest of the chapter, the 15th century map along with the corresponding areas on the 1680’s map and the modern satellite image have been grouped starting from page 59-61 for comparison.

Fig. 29 Aerial photograph of the research area taken in 1954. The red arrows show the predominant orientation of the fields. © Istituto Geografico Militare, Fotog. 582, Pr. 4045/14.
Fig. 30 Map made at the end of the 15th century at the time of the occupation of the monastery by the monks from San Giorgio Maggiore. It shows the area NorthWest of the Meolo called San Pietro Novello. Source: Sartor, L., 2010, p.141.

Fig. 31 Roughly the same area as fig. 28 from the map of 1680. Note the characteristic bend in the river Meolo, where the abbey is situated. © State Archives of Treviso (ASTV), Mappe antiche, b.11, photographed 17/10/2012.
Fig. 32 The same area as the above on a 2012 satellite image © Google Earth.

Fig. 33 The area of the monastic domain on the other side of the river Meolo (side of the abbey) to that of fig. The long ditch winding through the center and top of the map is the Fossa Bruna. The road passing the abbey (on the right of the map is the Via Roma. Fornaci is located on the left of the map, North-West of the abbey. Source: Sartor, I., 2010, p.141.
Fig. 34 Same area as fig. on 1680’s map. The abbey can be seen on the right, the villa near the cross roads, to the right of the abbey, no longer exists. ASTV, *Mappe antiche*, b.11.

Fig. 35 A satellite image of the area of ‘Villorba’, the same area as figures 33 and 34. Note the unchanged course of the Meolo in the foreground with the characteristic ‘heel’ to the left of the abbey. © Google maps.
1) Villorba

The area immediately surrounding the abbey is referred to as Villorba in the Codex Pirensis. Like the other toponyms used for areas of the domain it could refer to a villa surrounded by forest (orba then being a bastardisation of orbis -meaning ring- hence surrounded).\(^{117}\) A roman villa destroyed or villa surrounded by forest Orba could also be derived from Orbare meaning to have been plundered or destroyed. A roman villa could have been plundered and burned at the time of the Barbarian invasion after the fall of the Roman Empire (between 500 and 900 A.D.).\(^{118}\) The Fossa Bruna runs through this area making it the first area to be reclaimed by the monks. The fields in this area, especially those

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\(^{117}\) Favaro, A., 1988, p.29.

\(^{118}\) Ibidem, p.29.
South of the Via Romana and bordering the Via Casaria are oriented on the Fossa Bruna.
This supports the hypothesis that the Fossa Bruna, whilst primarily serving as a drainage ditch, also served as a border for several properties. This must have been decided before the Fossa Bruna was dug. The most identifiable example of the ditch serving in this way is the peculiar route the Fossa Bruna takes around the fields of the Toppan families farm.
On the 1680 map meadows (pradi) and a forest (bosco) are located along the Via Casaria. Because of the latter’s proximity to the Vallio river it is probably a remnant of the ancient forest of Vallio (Boso di Vallio). On the 1980’s topographical map the name for the fields located here is Gonfo, a name that always pointed towards the presence of a forest (usually located in a meander of the Piave).
The forest and the meadows have since vanished but as the above mention of the toponym Gonfo shows, the fieldnames still point to the old landscape in this area.
The line of red arrows located in the bottom left most corner of fig. 25 shows that the fields followed the outline of the forest here proving that the forest outdated the reclamation of this area.

2) San Pietro Novello

Next to the reclamation of the area of Villorba the monks, according to the bull of 1145, started assarting the area known as San Pietro Novello North of the Meolo. This is interesting for two points; 1) because the donation of lands in this region is only documented since 1197 and the monks are hereby assarting land directly under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch, 2) the names used by the monks for this area differed throughout the centuries following the different uses this land was put to. At first they must have left some forest on this land as this forest is called Pater Noster. The name later associated with this land is that of Pra(do) Maggiore or great meadow. As shall be shown with Pralongo, it was customary for the monks to locate their meadows along the banks of the rivers on their property. This is a system well practiced throughout Europe as the ground here is usually wet and ultimately suited for grazing. The sheep or cattle also keep the grass on the levees at a reasonable height.
In comparing the above set of maps the conclusion can be drawn that the lay-out of the fields has differed very little between the 15th century and now, save that the course of the road has been changed at least three times. At the end of the 15th century it cut straight across the lower left part of the area to link up with another road which seems to have also been connected to the abbey via a bridge. This bridge has vanished by 1680 and the road has been changed to follow the bank of the river Meolo. Since 1680 there has been very little change both in the orientation and the lay-out of the fields, so little in fact that the situation of 1680 can be read or reconstructed without much trouble. The road however has once more been changed, this time to link up with a bridge built further downstream of the Meolo to create the crossing of the Via Roma and Via Casaria. The road now runs diagonally across the area crossing both older versions.

3) Pralongo

This area is the one of the most difficult areas when not acquainted with old maps of the area to be able to link directly with the location of its name. Even the hydronym Correggio is very difficult to link with the current state of affairs even if the watercourse has not changed that much since the 1680’s and very probably before.
The name Pralongo points directly to the long belt of meadows that used to run along the banks of the canal, Correggio (see fig. 38). The hydronym Correggio literally means: corrected. However, the map of 1680 does not seem to depict any correction in the watercourse (see fig. 38). The name is only fully explainable when the satellite image of the area is consulted (see fig 39). It can then be concluded that the meanders of this branch of the Meolo were corrected having a much sharper and shallower shape in the past. By correcting the meanders of the river two things were accomplished, 1) more water could be deposited in the river and so the runoff of drainage and rainwater was enhanced, 2) more meadowland could be created along the banks of the canal hereby providing more farmers with land to graze their cattle.
Since the fields border the corrected ditch exactly the canalisation or altering of the meanders probably predates
Fig. 38 The area of Pralongo in 1680.

Fig. 39 Pralongo on a 2012 satellite image. Note the original meandering of the Correggio outlined in blue in the center of the image. © Google Earth.
the fields.

4) Campolongo

The area of Campolongo lies between that of Pralongo and the canalised river Palombo, a hydronym that most probably points to the location of a tree lined stream where wood pigeons where abundantly present.

The name Campolongo, unlike that of Pralongo, can be very easily connected with the modern landscape. Directly NorthEast of the last great artificial meander of the Corregio are located three rows of fields. The fields stretch from the back of the three houses right up until the banks of the Palombo. The same type of fields, generally a little wider, can be found SouthWest of these houses. This type of field strongly suggests the reclamation of a wetland or marsh in this area.

The original field system has been preserved in this area (see fig.34).

Unlike the Pralongo meadows the long fields of Campolongo can be easily spotted in the landscape. What they do have in common with the fields of Pralongo is that they point to the original landscape. Besides the long fields there are certain fields in the West of fig. 41 that point to enclosures being used in this part of the monastic property. Note the surviving border of trees surrounding these fields. They are shorter in length than the extended fields. Enclosures were known to have been used in this part of the property.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Da Portogruaro, D., 1948, p.82.
Hydrography

Ditches and canals:

**Fossa Bruna**
The Fossa Bruna is an irrigation channel or ditch running throughout the lower property of the monks between the Vallio and the Meolo. It could be the oldest hydronym given by the monks to any water source due to its origin. The name is a mix of Italian and German. Fossa meaning ditch in Latin and Italian and the word brun, meaning spring in German.\textsuperscript{120} The digging of this ditch is never mentioned in the codex. This would suggest an early construction date, as the documentation of this period has not survived intact, pointing to an early project of the monks. To have acted as an irrigation ditch used primarily in the reclamation process the date of digging would be between the 9\textsuperscript{th} and 10\textsuperscript{th} century. It can still be seen on aerial photograph of the 1950's and topographical map of the 1980's.

It appears very early among the list of donations to the abbey as a border to the donated land. The ditch does not run straight but cuts through the domain South of the monastery in a winding course. It clearly was meant as an irrigation ditch which points to the need for reclamation when it was dug. This supports the that it was one of the first projects of the monks and that it was dug to to take stress of the carrying capacity of the Vallio, helping to prevent flooding.\textsuperscript{121} It also benefited the irrigation of the area South and South West of the monastery as it ran passed many fields and linked the irrigation ditches with the rivers. This could point to a Frankish presence among the monks or in the area.

**Tagliata/Tagladela**
On the 1st July 1221 mention is made of a ditch being dug between Meolo and Vallio. This would make it the second connection between these rivers. It was called the Tagliata, literally the cut. The Tagliata would later be known as the Fossa Vecchia (old ditch) and was the first half of what would later be known as the Fossetta canal.

**Fossetta**
During the 16\textsuperscript{th} century Venice became ever more concerned with protecting its lagoon from silting up and becoming dry land. The key concern was that of a military reason, namely the lagoon formed the walls or barricade of Venice against attack. As long as the lagoon remained, Venice was protected. Another prime reason was that of speed of navigability of the waterways throughout the Veneto instead of the bumpy dirt tracks and roads, many of which were remnants of the Roman centuriation.\textsuperscript{122} Since Venice was dependant on the produce of the mainland and the forests there for timber it was vital to keep the waterways navigable. This is why Venice from the beginning of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century became very interested in mapping the waterways of the mainland and planning the improvement of the connection between supplier and client. Not forgetting the ever present need to

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\textsuperscript{120} Sartor, I., 2010, p.28.
\textsuperscript{122} Bevilacqua, E., 1984, p. 37.
keep the lagoon wet.

The most important project undertaken in the research area concerning the former reason was the digging of the Fossetta. The changing of the Piave riverbed to flow into the Adriatic instead of the lagoon was the largest and boldest project undertaken by the republic of Venice in this period in the research area (see fig. 43).

Two investigations into the possibilities for improving the connection between Venice and the mainland were carried out by the engineers Marco Cornaro and Sabbadino. Cornaro concentrated on the connection between the lagoon and the area surrounding the village of Croce. The most obvious reason was that Cornaro was a tenant of the monks who lived in Croce but worked for the Republica as a water engineer. In the 1460’s he carried out a survey focusing on the navigability of the rivers Meolo and Vallio which were the chief connection of the abbey and the lagoon. Finally he submitted a plan for a canal to be dug which would link the Vallio to the Meolo and run as far North as the village of Croce. The canal ends in between the village of Croce and the town of Fossalta, just South of both settlements. The canal was approved and finished in 1483.\(^{123}\)

The Tagliata was for some time referred to as the Fossa Vecchia and the new ditch was called both the Fossa Nuovo and the Fossetta. These two became one when the Fossetta was dug. Interestingly the canal cuts across the Via Annia. In so doing it can be said to have taken its place putting as it


did this whole area in communication with Venice and Eastern Europe. Especially the area of Croce benefitted from this connection as this area was heavily wooded and the connection to Venice was much improved by this canal. The transport route was hereby considerably shortened.

**Fossa di Mulino near SanAndrea di Barbarana**
A ditch called la Fossa is located near the current village of Sant’Andrea di Barbarana. It is mentioned in a contract of 1453 when the Bishop of Treviso rents the mill located on this ditch and the land belonging to the mill for 8 stari wheat per year. The *staro* (bushel) varied in weight from region to region and event between towns. It was also referred to as *staio* or the Venetian *stajo* (plural *stagi*). 100 Venetian *staji* equals 29.19 imperial quarters. The rent of the mill (8 stari) works out to roughly 30 kilos of wheat. The mill still stands, obviously having been restored throughout the centuries, but was abandoned after the 1966 flood. The ditch used to link the stream called the Zenson (now canalised) with the Piave.

**Port**
The port on the Meolo was the most important connection with Venice that the abbey had. Although the monks traded chiefly with Venice they also traded with the city of Treviso. Recently archaeologists have found the outlines of foundations of Roman warehouses on satellite imagery. These were located on the opposite bank of the Meolo to the abbey. The port is thought to be Roman in origin. These could date between late antiquity and early medieaval. In 1031 the Patriarch had warehouses built on the banks of the Pero (see ch. 1.2). Later landing stages were built on the Meolo, mostly where there were villas in the 16th century. Fornaci must have had one in the Middle Ages because of the bricks produced here. For better transport the Meolo was dredged in 1409, 1561 and 1583. Followed by the Vallio. The Meolo was the most important water route for transport.

**Wells**
The wells like the Fossa Bruna irrigation ditch, two basic elements of the monastic landscape, have proven to be the most surprising hydrological works implemented by the monks. The well located in the Romanesque cloister of the abbey is a type known as Pozzo alla Veneziana after the many wells of this type used in Venice.

To channel the rainwater into the four collection points surrounding the well the sides of the cloister slope downwards. In contrast the well is raised so that the area surrounding the wells also slopes. This causes the rainwater to run into a gutter at the base of the slopes which in turn channels the rainwater to the collection points formed by round concrete disks containing four holes. The disks let the water run into a large square cistern located under the well; it is filled with fine river sand which filters the

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128 Ibidem.
132 Ibidem, p. 231.

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Fig. 44 One of the drain covers in the cloister of the abbey of Our Lady of Pero. Photo taken by the author in 2012.
water as it permeates the sand. A layer of clay lies under the sand layer and forms the base of the cistern. As clay is impermeable the water collects in the top of it and is channelled into the well shaft via small inlets in the base of the shaft.

This type of well began to be built in Venice in the 13th century. These well builders were included as a specialised branch in the guild of masons. Each well in Venice is located above a cistern described above. They continued to be built until the 19th century; it is thanks to this continuity of building that the wells can generally be dated by studying the well-head as these followed the building style of the period. However, if there was any need of repair the well head could be replaced by a more contemporary design. This is the case of the well in the old cloister which is dated to the 17th century and was built following a second restoration phase of the abbey. The building of such an underground structure is not mentioned in the codex or other documents; such an undertaking should have been mentioned but since it is not this points to an early construction date. Before 1500 otherwise it would have been mentioned in the codex. What makes this cistern even more interesting is that it is connected via an underground tunnel to the well of the Davanzo house to the East of the abbey. The passage can clearly be made out on satellite imagery as it has pushed up the earth above it causing a discolouration of the grass.

The link between the Davanzo house and the abbey in local history is that it was first built by the monks as their temporary abode while they were building the Romanesque part of the abbey. The current Davanzo house dates to the thirteenth century but it could have been built on top of an older structure. While this would explain the connection of the wells, especially if at first the monks kept the Davanzo house as an outbuilding it does not explain why other wells in the vicinity also have the reputation of being connected via underground tunnels. Most notably the Mattiuzzo’s well is reported to be connected to a tunnel “as high as a man”.

This could mean that the abbey well is the centre of an underground rainwater distribution system.

134 Pers. comm. Silvio Mattiuzzo, April 2012.
The problem remains in dating this system although it must have been carried out prior to 1497 at the time of the take-over of the abbey by San Giorgio Maggiore and the start of the codex. The best evidence of a thirteenth century date are sketches of well-heads by Fr. Da Portogruaro which date to the thirteenth century. This was a relatively peaceful and wealthy period for the abbey. The wells can be dated precisely because they include a water jug motive on the front which was common in the thirteenth century.

The donator of the well would then have his coat-of-arms attached, only the shields remain on the sketches with no emblems, these have seemingly been weathered away or were simply not included. The inclusion of the cross on the side of the well implies a religious institution as its sponsor and the star is an emblem of Our Lady. The flower was commonly added to the well so is only of aesthetical value here. Since we know that the abbey was dedicated to Our Lady of the assumption about 1250 then the wells date to the latter part of the thirteenth century. The water is now stagnant and cannot be used as drinking water. The tunnel carrying the water was most likely shelled during the First World War and due to this damage (rubble and dirt in the water cutting it off from the abbey) the water became stagnant.

The well is made up out of large bricks covered in plaster. Earlier wells dated to the late fifteenth century were recorded by Fr. Portoguraro certainly belonging to the first restoration phase by the monks of San Giorgio Maggiore.

Levees

The San Marco levee
In 1543 the construction of the levee organised by the Republic of Venice along the Piave is completed. Flooding of the Piave is now for some time under control but not banished from the region. It will always be a problem to this day (a major flood occurred in 1966). The levee runs the length of the river from Fagarè down to the coast of the lagoon. Most of the villages are located behind the levee. The top of the levee is currently and might have always been in use as a road.

Other levees
The levees of the Meolo and Vallio by 1559 were maintained by the tenants whose land they bordered at the monks’ expense. The construction of the levees is attributed to the monks. The management of the levees by those who lived near them was not new to the people of the Veneto. Already in 1409 this is mentioned in a decree by the Podesta of Treviso. According to this decree the Podesta asked the farmers and inhabitants of the towns on whose territory the Piave bordered to repair or build where needed levees next to the river to prevent floods.
3.4. 5th Century land ownership crisis, decline of abbey lands and subsequent take-over by the Venetian abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore at the end of the 15th century.

By 1449 the abbey itself was in bad shape with a side chapel of the church on examination found to be used as a stable. A total of three monks were left. The abbey had hit a vocational and economical crisis. A decision is made to put the abbey under the command of abbot Leonardo Barbo who is to set things right. Unfortunately he dies a month after having being appointed Abbot. His brother Giovanni is chosen to take his place. He is however inexperienced and starts to sell nobles land belonging to the abbey. It had been the practice to rent rather than sell land to nobles, as seen in earlier transactions. On 27th June 1449 Pope Nicolas V intervenes with a bull making the abbey a commandery. This means that Barbo is no longer abbot until he dies but can be replaced as soon as another suitable abbot is found. The damage Barbo can do to the property by way of selling land however, is not reduced in any way by this bull.

The same document describes the abbey as being situated in the middle of a forest. The very mention of this seems to point to a negative feeling of the Pope about the situation and not just a mere note about the location of the abbey.

Sartor, I., 2010, p.117.
Since Giovanni Barbo is remembered as being one of the worst abbots in the history of the abbey one must presume that the process of cropping and managing the woodland had been neglected allowing nature to take over. This was not the only crime remembered in documents, the final outrages committed was the selling of land which had been granted to the abbey in 1192. This land had earned the name of Rotta (literally meaning 'break') pointing to a break in the levee of the Piave. In 1473 abbot Giovanni granted this land to the noble Domenico Bragadin. The grant concerned 150 campi of forest. It was described in the contract as uncultivated and wooded. He further let the land ownership administration get so out of hand that the monks of Sant’Ariano on the island of Torcello in the lagoon gained control of land located in Pralongo.

The situation could not last and indeed in 1469 abbot Giovanni Barbo whether out of guilt, remorse or shame resigns his office and retires. On the 7th June that same year Pope Paul II appoints Antonio Bembo as the new abbot having been chosen by the congregation to see if the abbey can be saved whilst remaining autonomous. This means that unless the abbey can become self sufficient it will be handed over to another congregation of monks and become a subsidiary monastery of their abbey. This would later happen but the new abbot tried to set things right. The land was eventually either repurchased or returned by the nobles who had bought it, the abbot having had no right to sell the land in the first place.

In 1479 the fate of the abbey is so dire that it is entrusted to the monastic congregation of the Benedictines of Santa Giustina in Padua, with the intention of handing it over to the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. This congregation of Santa Giustina was a fairly new congregation in 1479. It was founded by the abbot Ludovico Barbo in 1450, who wanted to reform the Benedictines along Cistercian lines. Returning to the rule, meditation and the recitation of the divine office as a group were his main points of reform. Many monastiers from all over Italy joined the congregation. Peculiar to this reform was the fact that no new monasteries were founded, only pre-existing monastaries joined. This was not surprising as the last vestige of the plague had hit as late as 1450 in the Veneto. Many monasteries were in bad economical shape with many spiritual problems. One of the larger abbeys to join was that of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. The economical viability of keeping the abbey of Our Lady of Pero functioning had to be decided upon by the whole congregation. Having discussed the issue the council desires that an investigation into the state of the abbey and its property is needed.

In 1480 abbot Bembo appears in a religious court charging the monks of Torcello with theft of the land in Pralongo. The abbey of Sant’Ariano claims rights dating back to 1434 but their document is found to have been forged. Bembo wins the case, with the monks of Torcello being fined. As the abbot is trying to set things to rights, an investigation into the state of the abbey is undertaken. The monastic buildings are found to be in bad shape and in urgent need of repair. There is now mention of a stone bridge crossing the Meolo. The assets of the monastery are dwindling fast and the revenue due to a falling demography in crisis. It is no wonder then that the abbot at the end of the 1480’s declares the abbey unfit to exist autonomously. The abbey is handed over to San Giorgio in/near Venice on the 11th of March 1493.

In this time period the local name of Monestier is first mentioned later to be spelt Monastier. The monks from the San Giorgio abbey, known in the dialect as Zorzi, now set about restoring the abbey. They restore the abbey and its church in 1497.
In 1499 they impose rents on the nobles who own land belonging to abbey, another action against the theft of land of forty years before. The abbey seems to have favored a 5 year lease contract for new tenants until well into the 16th century.\textsuperscript{145}

In 1525 there was a flood of the Piave that created an oxbow lake South of Ponte di Piave.\textsuperscript{146} Sant’Andrea di Barbarana was now located on an island cut off by the new bed of the Piave. The church was damaged in this flood and replaced. It was however no longer the parish church for Sant’Andrea. This was built on the opposite bank of the Piave (on the side of the abbey).

By the end of the 16th century the borders of the parishes and the monistic domain itself had taken the shape of the current landscape.

\textbf{3.5 Salvaging the Mediaeval landscape 1500-1680}

Even with capital at their disposal, it was some time before the venetian monks could set things straight with the management of their new domain.

The monks had set about restoring the abbey and had probably just finished making it habitable, when the following complaint was made to the Podesta of Treviso by the monk in charge of the administration, Don Cipriano da Udine. The tenants of the abbey were guilty of overusing the land by spreading more manure each season and thus drying out the soil. Furthermore they were cutting branches off trees for fodder in an indiscriminate way and harvesting mulches and hay without authorization. He also castigated the tenants for damage done to the buildings. One wishes he had been more explicit in this last digress. It is presumable that the tenants were guilty of not having kept up repairs on their farmhouses or out-buildings. This explains why in 1543 the monks of San Giorgio began a restoration program for the farmhouses of their tenants.\textsuperscript{147}

The problem with the working of the land by the tenants must have carried on long enough for the monks to draw-up a new contract in 1559 (see Appendix 1).\textsuperscript{148}

It listed in detail the percentages of the crops that were to be payed to the abbey by the farmers. On top of the payment in crops, annual servitudes were expected from the farmers; 6 young roosters, 6 capons, 6 chickens, 180 lbs. of pork meat, 100 brooms, 160 bundles of firewood or kindling and 130 eggs.

What makes the above contract even more interesting is that it not only deals with the produce the tenants have to grow but also with the relationship between the abbey and the tenants through such persons as the cellarer or agents of the monks.

The contract shows that the monks managed their land through these agents and that the contract was so detailed as to include the amount of special crops to be planted. These were traded with Venice, for example the flax crop. One \textit{campus} of flax had to be planted for every 30 \textit{campi} of land worked by a tenant.

Besides the stipulations of conduct between abbey and tenant it is surprising that the contract also stipulated the conduct between tenants.

The monks set much store by an equable relationship being maintained between their tenants and that this was as important as to warrant this behaviour be kept on pain of forfeiture of rights.

The monks wanted no fights or brawls or calling of names (injustices). The farmers had to settle all disputes through the monks. Not only was there a need for the farmers to be on good terms but also to be good friends.\textsuperscript{149}

This was effected by the strict commands governing working for one another and trespassing on others land (see

\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem, p. 142, this particular contract lasted from 1544-1549.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibidem, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{147} Sartor, I., 2010, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibidem p. 144-146, kindly translated from the old Venetian dialect by Zeno Mattiuzzo.
\textsuperscript{149} Sartor, I., 2010, p.147.
Appendix 1).

Perhaps the most interesting article in the contract concerning the management of the land is that of the upkeep of the ditches. Many of these ditches remain today in the area of the abbey. That the upkeep was the job of the tenant is not surprising. What is very enlightening about the management of the ditches is that it is stipulated so precisely how much of the ditch is be cleared or dredged per year. This epitomises the great organisational role the monks played in maintaining the landscape even though the tenants were responsible for carrying out the work.

With this contract the monks of Venice seem to have finally succeeded in gaining control of both tenants and the management of their property, judging by the good fortunes met by the abbey after this date. The economic crisis seems to have come to an end thanks to the actions of the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore and the vocational crisis resolved.

Unfortunately for the monastery the glowing future and renaissance is short lived. In 1797 Napoleon conquers Italy. Soldiers are installed in the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore and the monks move to the abbey of Monastier. After this first commendation the monastery of Our Lady of Pero is suppressed by Napoleon. Even after the official suppression and closing down of the abbey a few monks continue to live here until the selling of the abbey on 19th September 1837 to Count Ninni (of Greek origin). The Ninnis originated from Thessalonika in Greece, before moving to Venice in the 18th century.150

Chapter 4

Legacy of the monastic landscape in Monastier

Fig. 50 Bell tower of the abbey of Our Lady of Pero seen from the Via Roma in North West direction. Photo taken by author in April 2012.
4 Introduction

The final chapter will deal with the legacy of the monks in the modern landscape of Monastier di Treviso and surrounding Countryside. The first subchapter will deal with the relics of the monastic landscape in a general way. Subchapters 4.2 and 4.3 however concern the tenant farms in particular.

4.1 The relics of the monastic landscape

The relics of the monastic landscape exist in layers. Although the exact Mediaeval layer has been slightly altered with projects undertaken in the Renaissance like the relocation of Sant’Andrea di Barbarana, we can still reconstruct the Mediaeval lay-out using written sources, maps and satellite images. The most important features in terms of built heritage of the Middle Ages that are still present in the landscape are those of the monastery itself and certain farmhouses. Other relics are the infrastructure, most notably the Callalta and the Fossabruna.

The monastic buildings, in particular the two courts of the monastery (first court constructed in the 10th century, second court 16th century) symbolise two distinctive periods that helped shape the monastic landscape in this area. The first court is traditionally built with the colonnaded arches running three sides of the central cloister housing the well. The first cloister houses the well, the latter stands in the middle of the cloister. The second court is twice the size of the first providing access to a large wine cellar. The 10th century cloister was the first part of the monastery to be built and stood alone for 400 years. he Renaissance both in terms of a new time period but also of the rebirth of the power of the monastery in this region and the projects that were put into place after the monks from Venice inhabited the location.

It should be stressed that there was no beginning and end to the Mediaeval landscape but an evolution. The Venetian monks rehabilitated the Mediaeval landscape and had to make decisions that would make the surrounding landscape productive.

Already the two courts of the monastery have been sold by Count Ninni to private owners starting from 1994. Those that inhabit the oldest court have begun an extensive restoration project to recreate the 10th century building. This involves restoring the cloister with its colonnade of arches. It had been bricked up. Studies are underway researching the lay-out of the church. So far it seems to follow the general lay-out of a single isled Romanesque church with a ring of three small apses surrounding the central apse.

The lay-out of the monastic farms is well known and very distinguishable from the air to the more modern farms. Modern farms, though built very like the monastic farm (arcaded front etc.), are much shorter in general.

152 Ibidem, May 2012.
than the older farms. The Mediaeval farm type is known as a *casa colonica* or *rurale*.\(^{153}\) It was designed to house two to three grain and hay lofts. It is clear from the size of these lofts that the remaining produce after the tithes had been subtracted must have been quite large. The hay loft (locally known as a *barco*) was generally located above the barn so that the hay could be dropped down through a trapdoor and then distributed to the troughs in the stalls. It was a well ventilated room comprising of only three sides, one side was totally open to provide easy access. The hay was sheltered from the rain by an overhanging roof/eaves supported by an arcaded wall. To further supply ventilation, square-shaped holes were left in the masonry of the back wall of the loft.

The bedrooms occupy one third of the total volume of the building and the other rooms are located on the ground floor and the upper floor.\(^{154}\) The ground

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\(^{153}\) Case rurali, 1992, 17.
\(^{154}\) http://www.istitutovolterra.it/800/casarurale.htm (Consulted 23rd June 2013).
floor is connected with the others by a small staircase in the center of the building. The rooms downstairs are larger than the others since it houses both the kitchen and dining room. The latter forms the center of the family life.\textsuperscript{155}

Each farm was surrounded by a farmyard, the borders of which were formed by paths or ditches. Many still remain to this day. The most identifiable feature of the old farmhouses is their roof; to identify them you have to look at them from the air. They are very long buildings with a characteristic overhang near the back (roof of the barn).

Another type of house found on the monastic domain was the casone or laborors house. These houses were made of straw and mud and had thatched roofs. It was usually square or rectangular in shape and since it was easily and cheaply made using local material it was used and built by labourers and fisherman in the marshes. Some can be identified on the 1680 map in Monasti-

\textsuperscript{155} Ibidem, (Consulted 23rd June 2013).
er due to their characteristic straw thatched roof. They consisted of three rooms: the kitchen, the barn and the porch.  

The farms form an important source as we have no written information on the tenants of the first wave of monks to occupy the monastery. Although we will never know their names the houses they lived in can be logged in the landscape, at least those that still stand. In the early 1800’s a new type of contract was concluded with many farmers in the region of the Po valley, it was known as the Mezzadria contract. In this contract a land-owner (usually a noble) would provide a farmer with a farmhouse situated in the vicinity of the fields and the farmer and his family would have to cultivate the land. In essence this was no different to the contract many families already had with the monks. In Monastier the Count merely took over this contract with the farmers that had stayed on when the monastery was suppressed. The one difference between the contracts was that 50% of all the produce would now be paid to the padrone, instead of the mixed system of portions of produce to the abbot. The farmers instead of coloni where now known as mezzadrini and often had to hire labour for working the fields. This was an ancient system. These daily or weekly workers where known as contadini or braccianti.

The main crops which were maize, wheat, corn, barley, wine, and vegetables have largely disappeared. Wheat is the main crop grown in the region, even a lot of the vineyards have been removed to make space for wheat fields.

The Mediaeval roads are still in use today because of their stable soil base and in some cases are even of Roman origin (see Chapter 3.3). No roads really had names except locally. Later names were given to the roads. The 1680 map shows roads such as the Via Roma as strade commune (communal roads). Later in the 1800’s this was changed to Via Roma. The Via Casaria took its name directly from the dairy of the abbey. This lateria called the Tezza della Vacche owned 50 campi of grassland ‘for cattle rearing’ located to the front of the building. It is still standing today located at the end of the Via Casaria where it crosses the Vallio.

The Callalta is now known as the Via Postumia este or Eastern Via Postumia. The history of the region has become amalgamated, in this case (and it is the only one known regarding infrastructure) allowing a medievale road to masquerade as a roman one. The ancient ‘Callalta’ or rather the ancient road to across the Piave is now confusingly called the Calaltella.

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156 http://www.istitutovolterra.it/800/casone.htm (Consulted 24th June 2013).
157 Ibidem (Consulted 24th June 2013).
4.2 Heritage value of tenant farms: Case-study Mattiuzzo farm Monastier

The Mattiuzzo farmhouse is clearly a Mezzadria building type and one of the best preserved in the area. It has the typical arcaded front and long barn attached to the rear of the house with an overhanging roof covering an arcaded patio. It is a high house being three stories high originally. The house was divided in two at the turn of the last century to accommodate a cousin branch of the family moving in when their farm had been sold. Their farm was located at the top of the Via Casaria close to the crossroads, near the abbey, locally known as the Croce Via. The family and the farm house have experienced much. Most damage done to it of recent date was during the First World War when an Italian gun battery was located just behind the farmhouse to shoot at the Austrians on the banks of the Piave. The Austrian gunners finally located the batteries position and shot at them, one of the shells shot over the roof of the farm house at such a low altitude that all the tiles came loose and slid off the roof. This explains the presence of the stone foundations for the guns still present near the courtyard of the farm house. In the last century up until the 1980’s mixed farming was practised, the fields have since then been annexed to form part of the emerging grain belt sweeping the area.

As stated there are no documents that deal with the earliest tenants, suffice it to say that when the tenants are first drawn up in a list in 1538 the Mattiuzzo’s are already mentioned. The barn has been dated (based on the lay-out and the bricks it is built out of) to about the 13th century. The following is the history of the family and how they came to live in Monastier as passed down through the ages:

The Mattiuzzo’s were warrior farmers from the North. The family historian (Camillo Mattiuzzo) has since traced the original surname as being that of Mattiatz which by the 16th century had become Mattiuzzo. They originated in Moravia and took part in the great trek of different nations that were dislodged in the East of Europe by

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161 Descended from a cousin branch of the family who live on the Via Casaria.
the Magyars (Magyars were invading Eastern Europe since the 9th century). The monks granted the Mattiuzzi the land directly opposite the monastery on the Via Casaria which the family have farmed until the 1980’s. Many inhabitants of Monastier refer to the Mattiuzzi as ‘l’antica famiglia’, the old family. According to the family, during the Second World War Mussolini issued an order to find out who the oldest family was in the region. Research found it to be the Mattiuzzi family and a signed commemorative document was given to the family proclaiming them the most ancient of all the families in Monastier. However, for fear of anti-fascist reprisals at the end of the war one of the female members of the family burned it. since the paper no longer exists nothing is known about the actual research. However, in the baptism register kept by the basilica in Monastier the Mattiuzzo’s go back to 1565.162

The mixed farming consisted of cows, mainly for the production of milk which was turned into cheese at the dairy processing facility at the end of the Via Casaria. Pigs and chickens were kept by the family. The former in a small pig sty made of plastered bricks with a wooden floor. The latter in a chicken coop made of wood. There were two vineyards, one on the banks of the Fossa Bruna, the other behind the farm. Each field was surrounded by hedgerows with some trees included in them. Mushrooms used to be foraged in them. This closed system of fields was already apparent in the Middle Ages (see ch. 3.4). Hay used to be grown on the pasture located right at the back of the farm, it is however unknown if this was the case in the Middle Ages, hay might have been taken from the common pastures still to be seen on the 17th century map (see fig. 38).

The field names are very interesting as they are descriptive of the area and the bond that the fields have with the family in terms of location. They are also in the Venitian dialect. Starting from the South they are De Sotto, Valle, and Prato. De Sotto broadly translates to under and over the Fossa Bruna, something not understood when looking at a modern map. The term points to the old course of the Fossa Bruna and the unique course it ran demarcating old field groups. That is to say the ditch acted as a demarcation and irrigation ditch. A ditch connected to the Fossa Bruna ran to the North of the vineyard in the Southern end of the Mattiuzzi farm (see fig. 57). It thus formed both the Southern and Northern borders of the fields located in front of the farm. Thus the fields were located ‘under’ and ‘over’ the Fossa Bruna. Valle means flood plain and although we would sooner link it to the Vallio, here it is linked with the Meolo which in the past occasionally flooded. This is not remembered to be the case by the last generation and it certainly isn’t recorded in recent history. It may have even stopped entirely after the dredging and canalisation of 1408 and the 16th century. It is a fossilised field name that does not have anything to do with the current situation but encapsulates a specific time period and a natural hazard in the area. Prato refers to the meadow at the Northern extremity of the land near the Croce Via. It is simply descriptive. No

special names are known to have been attributed to the vineyards, like the very practical field names they were known simply by their location. The one South of the farm was known as Vineto del sotto and the one located North of the farm as Vineto del Valle.

It is interesting to note that besides the unchanged group of fields farmed by the Mattiuzzo’s in Monastier these were not the only fields they cultivated. Two other fields were farmed by the family in the area. One field of about 8-12 campi was located in the vicinity of the current old-age home known as Casa di cura near Fornaci. It was called Tramonti, meaning sunset. The family does not own this field anymore, it having been sold some time between 1900 and 1970. The other was located in the marshes (in the vicinity of Marteggia) before these were reclaimed in the 1930’s. It was known as the field of the seven sisters (Sette Sorelle), the meaning of the name is no longer known. At the time of the second world war the family is remembered to have abandoned this field as it cost more to cultivate than it produced. These marshes used to be used as a natural resource for reeds, hunting and fishing.

Much manpower was needed to gather the reeds which were used for fuel and the weaving of seats for the houses. The amount of manpower needed to gather the reeds and the cost hereof were probably the deterrent that stopped the exploitation of these two fields.

This did not stop the hunting in the marshes as a means of supplementing the family’s diet. A way of doing this is still remembered to have been practised in the middle of the previous century. A way of hunting ducks was to sink a 210 litre drum into the marsh among the reeds until just the rim of the drum was sticking out of the mud. The hunter would then lift himself into the drum and wait for the prey, usually ducks, to show themselves. When wanting to make a kill the hunter would lift his head so that he was just looking over the rim of the drum, levy his rifle and shoot. In this way the hunter could remain dry; while he waited (often long hours) for the prey.
Mulberry trees had been planted under order by the abbey in the mid [1400’s] of the 14th century. Because of the lucrative silk-trade Venice had asked the mainland to start producing silk-worms through which silk cocoons could be harvested and spun into silk. Silk-worms thrive on mulberry leaves so the abbey commanded the tenants to plant Mulberry trees, presumably on the borders of their fields because that is where they can sometimes still be found today. This was a common sight in the 1960’s. To heighten the production of crops a ‘fence’ of maize stalks was planted in between the Mulberry trees. The harvest of the cocoons was labour intensive and time consuming. It took roughly 20 braccianto (laborers) hired for the job about 3 days to harvest the silk thread from the cocoons.163

Fodder for the animals was supplemented by the pollarding of the trees in the hedgerows. Gaggia or Acaccia (Robinia) were planted on the border between two farms. They were mainly planted along the ditches bordering the fields of one farm and another. The flowers of these trees offered another food source. The flowers of these resemble large white snow-drops. A regional practice is to dip these flowers in batter and then to fry them.

The use of these trees as markers of a border between farms is an important part of the history of the farms. Sadly not many of these trees remain today except for a few standing in farmyards.

Another supplement food source was mushrooms which would be foraged on the levees of the rivers and on the borders of farm fields where they grew at the foot of trees.164 This was mostly at the foot of the willows and poplars that grew along the levees of the Fossa Bruna.

The Mattiuzzo farm house was repaired as part of the the restoration campaign for the farm buildings begun by the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore in 1545. According to the commemorative plaque found in the attic of the farm this was carried out in the latter half of the 16th century. The exact date is not known due to the illegibility of the writing on the plaque. The only digits that can be made out are 155. The last digit could either be a 6, 8 or a 9.

Together with this plaque the abbey had a tondo or round disk of plaster on which was sculpted St George on horseback in the act of lancing the dragon.

The Mattiuzzo’s do not know the names of the fields belonging to their neighbours and vice versa.165 This makes sense as the contract of 1559 stated that no farmer was to work for another (see Appendix 1). The names of the Mattiuzzo’s fields were extremely practical; they encompassed simply the location or use of the field such as ‘Pra-to’ and ‘del Valle’.

163 Iole Mattiuzzo, April 2012.
4.3 The role of the family farm in the preservation of the monastic landscape heritage

The role of the family farm has always been the preservation of both the tangible (fields) and intangible (oral history and traditions) heritage of the monastic landscape through simply working the land from one generation to the other. Two periods affected the amount of farms being operated by tenants of the monastery in the 20th century. One was the period directly following the second world war when many sons of the farmers left for the cities to find jobs. Many did not take over the family farm. In recent years however, small farms have been sold by the Count and the old tenants told to leave.

This option of disinheriting the old tenants (in this case of the abbey and currently the Count) was incorporated in the Mezzadria contract of the 19th century; if for example the tenant family outgrew the self sufficiency capability of the farm they were evicted. The name of the contract is derived from the splitting of all the crops, both cash crops and subsistence crops, on a 50% basis between the tenants and the landlord. The contract was short-term (usually a year) and renewable. It was usually renewed though the renewal of the contract was not automatic. In the case when it was not renewed the tenant would have to leave. An example of this in Monastier, would be a branch of the Mattiuzzo family which was evicted as late as the beginning of the 1900’s.

While the contract at first catered to the mixed farming of the area it ultimately constricted the choice of crops the tenant could farm, limited the introduction of new crops and led to the dominance of the more valuable cash crop. In the case of Monastier and environs the Count sacrificed the tenants to supplement his dwindling profits by selling the land to other farmers who have since then set about cashing in on the specialised wheat crop. A break between the landscape, farmer and landlord has been the result.

Due to the economic difficulties the landlord found himself in at the end of the 19th century he has instituted a policy of selling land to farmers from outside the Veneto. This land does not fall under any contract and the farmers have decided to specialise in the growing of wheat. The same choice has been denied many farmers because they simply cannot pay the price of the farm so their land has been sold. When a farm (or two or three) is bought by a new farmer the field boundaries are destroyed (cutting of trees and hedges

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169 Ibidem, p.455.
and filling in of ditches). The fields are thus annexed and
the old field system destroyed. The original mixed farming which is centuries old in the region has all but disap-

peared.

What we must consider is that the old field structure is becoming extinct. Every year more and more of the sys-

tem fades. It is very important that the history of the farming in the area is brought to the attention of the current

Fig. 63 By overlaying the 1980's topographical map and the satellite image taken in 2003 the location and lay-
out of the fields in Monastier can clearly be traced. By adding the fieldnames we get an idea of the practical
style of naming the fields. 1) Prato (Pasture), 2) Vineto del Valle (Vineyard of the valley), 3) Del Valle (behind
the farm), 4). Del Sotto (Under the Fossa Bruna), 5) Vineto del Sotto (Vineyard on the Fossa Bruna).
© Google Earth.
farmers. Only if they understand the history of the area, and more importantly value it, can they be involved in supporting and helping to preserve it.

This can best be demonstrated by the amalgamation of the fields originally belonging to three farms into a couple of fields now belonging to only one farm. This is one of the most drastic interferences with the ancient field-systems in the area of Monastier. All three farm houses are in ruins and worst of all the land has been ploughed up to a meter deep. These farms originally belonged to the abbey. The new farmer is a local and was very interested in the finds he made whilst ploughing the fields. A wealth of archaeological material lay on top of the ground including sherds of Roman pottery, bits of marble, 17th and 18th century porcelain and the base for a Mediaeval pillar or column like those of the Mediaeval cloister found on the banks of the Vallio, which form the Eastern border of the farm fields. The farmer was most pleased to be able to discuss these finds with an archaeologist and had kept a few aside out of pure interest. I do not believe this to be an isolated case. Many farmers keep things they find and have a strong interest in the history of the area. Unfortunately, no matter how great the interest in the history of this region the declining number of farming families has had a direct effect on the upkeep of the monastic landscape and will ultimately rob it of a source and element of its heritage. This threat cannot be underestimated, as the loss of the small (family) farmer, who for centuries has farmed his plots, kept up the tradition and profit of mixed farming and in so doing has safeguarded the destruction of the monastic landscape, is

Fig. 64 Photo taken by the author in 2012, showing the amalgamated fields of three ruined and abandoned farmhouses near the river Vallio in Monastier.

"Farmhouses, sustainable agrarian communities, small plots, independent viable agricultural operations, crop diversity - all will become rarer. Ultimately they will be the stuff of pastoral literature, nostalgic film and the occasional agrarian activist’s call to resurrect an ideology that is no more.” Hanson, V.D., The other Greeks, 1995, p.431.

an ongoing occurrence in the former territory of the monks.

What other profession is there now (....) where the individual fights alone against nature, lives where he works, invests hourly for the future and never for the mere present, succeeds or fails by his own intellect, physical strength, bodily endurance, and sheer nerve? In what other vocation (....) does (he) care for so much about the promptness of his action, the unambiguity of his intent, and the value of his promised word?\textsuperscript{172}

How long will the remnants of the monastic landscape as shown in chapter 3.3 last if the current trend of large scale wheat production, which leads to the amalgamation of fields, continues?

The hope that the answer to the above question will be anything near positive is fading quickly. The question we should be asking ourselves is: can the specialisation of crops and the disinheriting and expulsion of the tenant farmer be stopped? Even this question is by now a rather leading one because the power to do so does not rest with the farmer who is or was the tenant of the Count, and even the academic student or professor can only try to point to the possibilities of the situation. That these can be grim has already been testified.\textsuperscript{173}

“Publications worry about our present food supply. [.....] They point out that the loss of crop diversity and farm decentralisation will eventually make these complex food systems - that is, all of us as well - as vulnerable to sudden collapse as the palatial agricultural economies of the pre-polis past.”\textsuperscript{174}

The character of fields and settlement patterns cannot be understood in isolation from the practice of farming [......].\textsuperscript{175}

If the practice changes as it has done then the importance of oral history and the passing on of that history must of necessity increase. However, with the loss of the Patriarchal society which is responsible for the passing on the traditions, techniques and family history, the oral history itself is in danger of extinction. Since the traditions and cultures of these farmers form the landscape to such an extent heritage forms an important part of the study of the landscape, and this leads to a greater understanding of the landscape. Understanding the history and heritage of a landscape leads to the farmer understanding his position in the landscape and he thereby increases his independence of the limitations imposed on him by the local environment by adapting his farming techniques to local ecological circumstances. This increases the profit he can extract from the landscape and makes him more proof against ecological disasters, which in turn lessens the vulnerability of the food systems present-day society is so dependent on.

As has been shown, heritage plays an extremely practical role in ensuring a farmer profit and through that decreasing the vulnerability of our food supply. Interest of the tenant families in their heritage must be maintained and these same families must be ‘educated’ in the importance of their heritage.

If this can be done by the writing and publishing of the research into the history of the landscape and especially the role of the tenants of the monastery therein, then the bond the tenants and population of an area has or will have with the landscape will be strengthened and supported.

\textsuperscript{172} Hanson, V.D., 1995, p. 433.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibidem, p.432-433.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibidem, p.432.
\textsuperscript{175} Williamson, T., 2003, p.199.
Conclusion

To conclude, no other period has left such a lasting effect on the landscape of Monastier as that of the period when the monks held it as property. Even Roman centuriation, the largest and most lasting human development of the landscape in pre-monastic times, has been almost completely destroyed save for a few remnants of its latticed infrastructure. The -by comparison- more well-preserved and long-lasting marks of development left by the projects of the monks, whether undertaken by themselves or under their aegis, are not the only reasons to mention this effect. More than anything the intangible heritage: traditions, oral history and feeling of connection with the monastic past are the source of this influence the monastery had on the landscape.

Instead of the latticed road network, the field system of the monks clearly dominates the clay lands that belonged to the abbey. After the reclamation of the marsh and cultivation of large forested areas in the early Middle Ages, a primarily open field landscape existed between the Vallio and Piave rivers. The landscape near the lagoon (in the East) was however dominated by small enclosures. These were situated near the meadows along the banks of the rivers, especially the Meolo river and the Correggio canal. Any fields used for crops were narrow and long stretching in a long line behind the farm. Consequently the farm houses were located near one another along a road, typical of a wetland landscape.

The Mediaeval use of the claylands in Monastier is very much the same as that of the clay lands in England. This means that the monks and tenants used a field system that was common for river clay landscapes using the wet banks of a river that are difficult to cultivate as common meadows for grazing their cattle. The remaining traces of this field system are now under threat because of the amalgamation of the fields. The role of the tenants has been seriously reduced in the ability to support the continuation of the farming legacy in the monastic landscape.

There is no doubt that the origins of the tenants of the monks have played a large role in this connection with the monastic landscape and not that of the Roman one. Many of the tenants, including the Mattiuzzo family, came from outside the region. They were new to the landscape at the time the Roman centuriation had faded into the swamp. What was left of the pre-existing landscape was not considered their heritage. This is in stark contrast to the inhabitants of other areas or towns such as Venice, whose population came from the Roman colonies of Aquileia and Altino and who still show more interest in the Roman history of the region than the people living on the mainland.

It seems that to understand the landscape it is vital to understand the history of the people that lived in the landscape. The study of the tenants has thus turned out to be of crucial importance to studying a monastic landscape. In some cases this may not be possible due to the tenants not being present any more. In that case the study of that landscape has lost a very vibrant source of its history and one can almost call it a layer of its identity.

In further studying the phenomenon of layers in the monastic landscape it can be stated that some of these layers can become amalgamated, sometimes in a natural way, such as the use of artefacts (in this case Roman) as modern day adornments in farmyards. Others are not natural and serve only to frustrate the reader of the landscape and the student of its history, as in the case of the use of the modern name Postumia Este for the Mediaeval road the Callalta. This is unnatural as the Callalta has never been proven to be Roman in origin but was documented as having been built in 1314. By naming it after a Roman road, which moreover has long lost its use and role in the landscape, serves only to confuse people studying the history of the area and creates a false link to a Roman past. Caution must therefore be taken to prevent the confusion of the culturally historical important elements in the landscape.

The naming pattern for the toponyms was unexpected and this formed the back-bone of the reconstruction of the landscape. The field names were explanatory, they evoked the lay-out of the landscape at a very early stage in its development (post Roman period). This occurs throughout the domain reflecting an organised or unified
landscape, which points to an overall organiser. In this case the abbey. This information could be used to identify other landscapes managed by one organisation, especially in Italy.

With this reconstruction it was easier to see why so many different parties, active in the area, had an interest in its potential after the reclamations projects had been carried out. Both the Venetians and the town of Treviso relied on the abbey to produce crops and special products essential to their economy and (in the case of Treviso) their daily lives. The abbey supplied Treviso with food products whilst the Venetians required flax for the ropes used in their shipping industry. Also wood and later silk were traded extensively with Venice. Thanks to the oral history of the silk production on the Mattiuzzo farm the production and trade process could be reconstructed. The farms were an essential part of the trade. This is shown in the detailed contract of 1559 which gives an account of how the abbey managed the production of these crops. It is the combination of these types of sources that will add the necessary detail to the management history of the landscape and the heritage of both the monks and the farmers to the regional economy.
Further Research

The lack of archaeological research in the research area was both amazing and worrying because there are so many artefacts lying, literally, under the farmer’s plough – it is under constant threat of being destroyed. More importantly, due to the lack of knowledge that could have been gained by archaeological excavations, there are large gaps in the knowledge of both the Roman as well as the Mediaeval landscape in Monastier. Although there have been some digs on the shores of the lagoon (generally close to the Fossalta canal) the area surrounding the abbey has been neglected. If an excavation were to be conducted on the grounds nearest the abbey more would be understood about the Roman landscape in this region. The age of the port on the banks of the Meolo could then be identified. Finally, the identity of the Roman building that the abbey is said to be built on top of could also be established.

Regarding the Medieval and modern landscape more farmers need to be interviewed about their land. They need to be asked about any finds they have ploughed up and their families histories. Especially the field names have to be recorded. This will be no easy task and it would work best when this task is undertaken by an inhabitant of Monastier or with an inhabitant as interpreter for two reasons.

1) The field names as shown in this thesis tend to be in the Venetian dialect.
2) The farmers are not inclined to talk to strangers, especially about their histories. Generally speaking, the newer the farmer is to the area, the more disposed he is to talking to strangers about his farm.

Another important angle of research should be the mixed farming heritage of the region. Especially how this worked in regards to keeping an assortment of livestock (such as pigs, cattle and sheep), all being reared in a predominantly agricultural area. This is not only important for the history of Monastier’s landscape but could prove useful for the research of monastic landscapes elsewhere in Europe.

The landscape of Monastier should be compared to the management and development of other abbeys and monasteries in the Veneto. The regional character of this evolution, management and especially the legacy of these landscapes must be compiled with the goal to compare them with other regions of Italy and Europe.

Since monastic landscapes are a European wide phenomenon, the research of one such landscape will automatically be useful (even only as a comparison) to other such studies in Europe. Furthermore, to bring this knowledge to the attention of other interested parties, the inhabitants of the research area should be involved as much as possible with the research process.

The family farm can help in preserving the link between the abbey and the tenants if the tenant family is still working the farm. If not, descendants of the families may have to be tracked down to be interviewed about the oral history passed down and their farm logged either in a GIS database or on a map. The former may seem to be going too far but the old field names will never be known if the families leave, and many have.
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Appendix 1

Contract between abbey of Our Lady of Pero and tenant famers (1559).176

That the said lessees (farmers) have to sow every year in the fields owned by the Abbey, three different crops, of which two are of large grains (wheat, barley, etc.), as will be directed by the agents of the Abbey, of good and clean grains and understanding that the agents of the said Abbey can claim half of the share to which the grower is entitled.

That the lessees have to give to the said Abbey, and in acceptable period of time, the crop of large grains. Having first been chosen in the fields by the agents (of the Abbey) and taken to the yard of the Abbey or to a place indicated to the lessees by the agents, they who sowed their own crop, and the said crop have to be winnowed from the weeds in quick time and to thresh the said grains in the chosen place without remuneration. If the fields are well-ploughed and kept the lessees may hand over a third of the crop, and if not well-ploughed, a half. On the fields tended by the lessees and where they live, the Abbey’s agents can impose at their discretion that the lessees have to sow and to thresh at their own expenses.

That the lessees have to give and be responsible for half of the wine by delivering the grapes to the Abbey, or will be told to squash and to press out the wine and they will also have to decant and to bottle the same wine, and that the share of the Abbey to be only black (red) wine, and in place of black (red) wine the lessees will have white wine, and in volume the quantity to be identical for both shares, except for those whose share of the contribution is by agreement reduced.

That the said lessees have to give a third part of the botflax (? linen) and hessian (?) according to the amount to be sown on the fields and in the gardens, whether green or dry, and all these things will have to be divided in the fields and the said lessees cannot harvest fodder nor legumes if they have not first sought permission from the Agents who are authorised to receive the said crops.

That the said lessees are obliged to sow one field (campo) of botflax, for every thirty fields (campi) that they farm and that belong to the Abbey.177

That the said lessees are also obliged to hand over one-half of all fruits that may come from such possession, gardens and enclosed fruit and nut fields (brolo), as well as half of all firewood and kindling, except the trunks of poplars, elms and others remain the sole possessions of the Abbey, and the lessees cannot interfere except for pruning them every three years. And no timber can be taken outside without the presence of the Abbey’s Agents, except first posts and other parts that may be necessary for use of the property can be held back. And such lessees cannot sell nor donate posts or face a cash penalty notwithstanding laws and if the Agents of the Abbey wish for whatever reason to uproot some trees, the same lessees will be compensated but the firewood remains for the use of the Abbey.

All trees that are growing along the rivers and public roads and boundaries are the property of the Abbey and said workers cannot interfere and cannot donate nor fell such trees, be they for fruits or timber use, under penalty of being fined one ducat per tree.

176 Sartor, I., 2010, pp.144–146, the original document can be found in the Venetian State Archives: ASVE, SGM, b.74, proc. 238/A.
177 Flax for ropes used by Venitians in their ship production.
The lessees will have to pay within established period of time these dues and if they fail to do so, in spite of any law to the contrary, will be fined as follows: pork meat at 4 solidi per lb. (weight not specified); roosters at 15 solidi per pair; chickens 30 solidi per pair; capons 40 solidi each; eggs 2 for one solidus; labour at 12 solidi each; wickers 4 solidi per bundle; bundles of wood at 2 solidi each and hay at 1.8 solidi each small stack.

The lessees are not allowed to remove reeds or straw, but only those reserved for the courtyards and the same applies to the hay.

The said lessees are obliged to plant on these lands vines and fruit trees as well as normal trees at their own expense and protect them from damage by animals.

And they are obliged to dig and clean out the required ditches on the said lands at the rate of one-third each year where most needed, so that every three years they are all cleaned out and repaired, where these ditches do not border with any other property, and are also responsible, all of them, according to the length of river-frontage, for maintaining and dredging the rivers Meolo and Vallio at the Abbey's expense.

They are not allowed to work nor possess other lands, or allow others to work the said lessee's land under penalty of eviction if they should not hold special licence in writing from the competent authority and this also applies to animals that may be kept in partnership with no others but the Monastery. They may keep up to ten geese for themselves and one for the said Abbey, and for more than ten geese they must give to the said Abbey a chicken.

Should the said lessees split from brothers or relatives (ipso facto) immediately and automatically forfeit all their rights and the same applies should they insult or assault the Agents of the Abbey and the Monastery. The said lessees cannot graze their animals on the land belonging to someone else or cause other damages under the penalty (Sol. XII) and this clause also applies to pastures reserved for the Abbey or if found in the field of the said Abbey and the same applies to the woods every time that these animals are found there and this penalty will be imposed irrespective whether the informer is local or an outsider and this person will get a half of the penalty for a day-accusation and for a night-accusation, the whole penalty (Sol. XII) in spite of laws for statutes to the contrary.

The lessees must provide lodging for the official of the inspection service, whom when their present duties are discharged cannot evict the said lessees or demand the reason for improvements to dwellings or surroundings in spite of laws and statutes to the contrary, but who cannot sow at will, nor remove reeds, fodder, straw, manure nor destroy haystacks or stooks nor the closure of lanes or of the courtyard nor other similar things.

So that the Abbey may grow and prosper and may give to one or another as judged by the officials to be needed and necessary.

So that the said lessees are obliged to plough over all the sections (of land) and river banks as much as can be done with a pair of oxen, but not to touch the half belonging to the Abbey.

So that the said lessees are obliged to plough, terrace, fertilize and drain and diligently work and manage the property given to them and to allow them and their families to live in the said buildings and courtyards. And those lessees who neglect the abovementioned properties and all things therein are responsible for all damages and interest to the Abbey for each transgression and will “ipso facto” deem to have forfeited their rights to the property without notice or extension “et hic erat finis dictorum capitolorum vulgarium”.

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