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ATTI E MEMORIE DELL'ATENEIO VENETO

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VENICE'S *TERRAFERMA* EXPANSION AND THE NEGOTIATION
OF TERRITORIES IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALY*

Introduction

For much of Italy, the first half of the *Quattrocento* was a transformative moment. Over the course of this period, the peninsula saw the establishment of a new political geography, one that was to remain virtually intact for over three centuries. The forces driving this change had been growing throughout the *Trecento*. As internal tensions became less and less manageable, several Italian cities became more and more reliant on the influence of a single oligarchy or family clan. These developments paved the way for novel concentrations of power, which eventually evolved into republican or princely states. After setting aside most sources of internal tension (in one way or another), the new regimes began to expand their spheres of influence over neighbouring territories. As they did so, they fostered new relationships with these areas, forged new tools to control them, and fabricated new narratives to justify their subjugation under an increasingly centralised domain¹. Still, it was not until the turn of the century that the political geography of the peninsula began its drastic transformation. At the time, as Garrett Mattingly put it in his classic volume on Renaissance diplomacy,

space was becoming completely organized; political interstices were filling up; the margins and cushions were shrinking, and the states of the peninsula

* The following is a revised chapter of my doctoral thesis: *Borders and the Politics of Space in Late Medieval Italy: Milan, Venice and their Territories in the Fifteenth Century*. Winner *ex aequo* of the Gorlato prize for the best thesis in Venetian studies, this work is soon going to appear as a monograph in the Oxford Historical Monographs series published by Oxford University Press. What follows owes much to my tutors, John Watts and Nicholas Davidson, but I also wish to record my thanks to Daniele Dibello, who took the time to read and help me improve the text.

¹ On these developments, see *Sperimentazioni di governo nell'Italia centrosettentrionale nel processo storico dal primo comune alla signoria*, ed. by Maria Consiglia de Matteis and Bernardo Pio, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2011; and broadly PHILIP JONES, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

were being obliged by the resulting pressures to a continuous awareness of each other².

This in turn set in motion a process that some have described as one of «Darwinian selection»³. As war became more expensive and being able to drain resources from subordinate territories became ever more crucial, many smaller and less organised dominions fell under the control of their neighbours. Some remained independent, but their fate was now bound to the handful of *potenze grosse* (quite literally, large powers) that had come to dominate the Italian stage⁴.

In northern Italy, these events brought the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Venice into direct conflict with each other. In 1402, the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti marked a watershed for the cities and territories of the Duchy, now claiming once again their fierce independence from Milanese influence. But the same could be said for those of the Veneto: as the Visconti's sphere of influence fell to pieces and the Carrara of Padua filled the resulting void, the Venetians were forced to take the field to protect their trade routes across the mainland. By the early 1420s, Filippo Maria Visconti, Gian Galeazzo's heir to the Milanese dominion, had seen the Duchy through a painstaking process of political re-composition. For its part, Venice now controlled the cities and territories once subject to the Carrara, had recently acquired the vast Patria del Friuli and was ready to continue its expansion towards eastern Lombardy. With such developments on the horizon, Mattingly's «continuous awareness» among the various states was bound to turn swiftly into open confrontation. Filippo Maria Visconti had no intention of abandoning his father's ambitions, while the new doge, Francesco Foscari, subscribed to the views of those in Venice who were less inclined to «farm the sea and leave the land alone»⁵. War broke out and soon extended from Tus-

² GARRETT MATTINGLY, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955, p. 60.

³ FRANCESCO SOMAINI, *Geografie politiche italiane tra Medio Evo e Rinascimento*, Milano, Officina Libraria, 2012, p. 55.

⁴ RICCARDO FUBINI, «Potenze grosse» e piccolo stato nell'Italia del Rinascimento. *Consapevolezza della distinzione e dinamica dei poteri*, in *Il piccolo stato. Politica, storia, diplomazia*, ed. by Laura Barletta, Franco Cardini and Giuseppe Galasso, San Marino, Aiop, 2003, pp. 91-126.

⁵ *Raphayni de Caresini cancellarii Venetiarum Cronica a. 1343-1388*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XII, ed. by Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Mediolani 1728, coll. 467-468: «proprium Venetorum esse mare colere, terramque postergare».

cany, where the Visconti tried repeatedly to penetrate the Florentine dominion, which was then allied with Venice, to the restive hills of Romagna, where local lords summoned the support of both powers to settle their feuds, and finally to Lombardy. The conflict saw Milan and Venice deploy an unprecedented array of forces, including experienced *condottieri*, such as the famed count of Carmagnola, as well as ambitious newcomers, starting with Francesco Sforza. As the campaigns unfolded, both parties called for the intervention of other powers: from the republics of Genoa and Lucca to the count of Savoy, from the Aragonese in Naples to the pope in Rome⁶.

Thanks to its experienced companies and ingenious *condottieri*, Milan started with an advantage. In the long run, however, it was Venice's new armies and abundance of resources that proved superior, allowing the Republic to extend its dominion over areas which had long been subject to the Duchy: the cities and territories of Bergamo, Brescia and later Crema – most of what is now eastern Lombardy. It was a huge win for the Venetians. In the 1460s, it was estimated that altogether, these areas supplied a third of all the revenues raised in the mainland (over 100,000 ducats)⁷. Such a large sum could only be raised in populous cities such as Brescia, which at this stage – with almost 40,000 residents and an economy in full bloom – could rival centres the likes of Florence and Bologna⁸. The same can be said about the Bergamasco, where the smaller city of Bergamo functioned as a market hub for the rich shipments of wool and iron produced in the nearby

⁶ The most reliable commentary on all these events is probably GAETANO COZZI, *Politica, società, istituzioni*, in *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia. Dalla guerra di Chioggia alla riconquista della Terraferma*, ed. by Id. and Michael Knapton, Torino, Utet, 1986, pp. 3-47; though see also MICHAEL MALLETT, *La conquista della Terraferma*, in *Storia di Venezia. Dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, IV, ed. by Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1996, pp. 181-244.

⁷ VENEZIA, *Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana* (henceforth BNM), Cod. It. VII, 2581 (=12473), cc. 359r-360v. Similar figures are discussed in GINO LUZZATTO, *L'economia Veneziana nei secoli '400 e '500*, «Bergomum», LVIII (1964), n. 2, p. 62.

⁸ The figure was calculated on the basis of fiscal records by CLAUDIO PASERO, *Dati statistici e notizie intorno al movimento della popolazione bresciana durante il dominio veneto (1426-1797)*, «Archivio Storico Lombardo», LXXXVIII (1961), pp. 71-97. We can draw a comparison with other cities thanks to the comprehensive tables compiled by MARIA GINATEMPO, LUCIA SANDRI, *L'Italia delle città. Il popolamento urbano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1990, p. 78.

valleys⁹. On the whole, the economic advantages gained from acquiring eastern Lombardy were twofold. Precious resources could now be drawn from these territories and some of their traffic could be directed towards Rialto. In addition, the Venetians were able to achieve the goal that got them involved in the conflict in the first place: protecting their mainland trade against foreign interference¹⁰. As the Republic consolidated its hold over these territories, its frontier with the Duchy of Milan was formally shifted westward and the political geography of the region profoundly redesigned. It was the last decisive step towards the establishment of Venice's dominion in the mainland.

Over the years, the making of the *Terraferma* state has drawn much attention from specialists of the peninsula. Aside from economic strategies, scholars have traditionally focused on the exercise of public functions in subject territories (such as the administration of justice and the collection of taxes)¹¹, on the development of new magistracies (in the centre as much as in the peripheries)¹² and on the so-called politics of law (notably the reissuing of statutes and the striking of pacts and conventions with local bodies)¹³. Recently, new research has shed light on

⁹ The only available estimate for the population of fifteenth-century Bergamo is that of 10,000 people as, first put forward by KARL JULIUS BELOCH, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, III, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1961, p. 142. However, it is reasonable to assume that even more people inhabited Bergamo at the time, especially considering that less than a century later, in 1526, a census conducted by local authorities counted almost 24,000 residents between the core of the city and the surrounding neighbourhoods: BERGAMO, *Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai*, Municipali, reg. 1, c. 301v, «description de tutte le anime dela città et borghi dentro e di fora».

¹⁰ The advantages this gave Venice throughout early modernity are discussed in GIOVANNI ZALIN, *Il quadro economico dello stato veneziano tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, in *L'Europa e la Serenissima: la svolta del 1509. Nel V centenario della battaglia di Agnadello*, ed. by Giuseppe Gulino, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2011, pp. 35-73; and especially PAOLA LANARO, *Reinterpreting Venetian Economic History*, in *At the Centre of the Old World: Trade and Manufacturing in Venice and the Venetian Mainland, 1400-1800*, ed. by Ead., Toronto, Victoria University Press, 2006, pp. 19-69.

¹¹ ALFREDO VIGLIANO, *Governanti e governati: legittimità del potere ed esercizio dell'autorità sovrana nello stato veneto della prima età moderna*, Conegliano, Edizioni Canova, 1993; LUCIANO PEZZOLO, *Il fisco dei veneziani: finanza pubblica ed economica tra XV e XVII secolo*, Sommacampagna (Vr), Cierre, 2003.

¹² MICHAEL KNAPTON, *Le istituzioni centrali per l'amministrazione e il controllo della Terraferma*, in *Venezia e le istituzioni di Terraferma*, ed. by Gherardo Ortalli, Bergamo, Assessorato alla Cultura, 1988, pp. 35-56; GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *Gli ufficiali veneziani nella Terraferma veneta quattrocentesca*, «Annali della classe di lettere e filosofia della Scuola Normale Superiore», IV (1997), n. 1, pp. 155-179.

¹³ GAETANO COZZI, *La politica del diritto nella Repubblica di Venezia*, in *Repubblica di Venezia*

lesser-known aspects behind the construction of the *Terraferma* state: the control of the environment and the management of food supplies¹⁴, the development of new written devices and archival series¹⁵, and even the role of symbolic narratives and cultural relations¹⁶. More importantly, for the scope of this essay, scholars have come to recognise that the degree to which Venice could enforce new policies, install new institutions, appropriate lands and generally shape people's lives on the *Terraferma* varied significantly across the dominion. In this respect, Gian Maria Varanini has talked about the existence of «two *Terraferme*»¹⁷. One was composed of cities and territories closer to the lagoon, where Venice's impact had been far more substantial, namely in the Trevigiano and much of the Padovano, as well as part of Friuli and the Adriatic coast. The other was made up of areas with less immediate access, such as the Veronese and the Trentino, and by Venice's recent acquisitions in eastern Lombardy: the Bergamasco, the Bresciano and the Cremasco¹⁸. Here, the construction of the mainland dominion had

e stati italiani. Politica e giustizia dal secolo XVI al secolo XVIII, ed. by Id., Torino, Einaudi, 1982, pp. 217-318; CLAUDIO POVOLO, *Un sistema giuridico repubblicano: Venezia e il suo stato territoriale (secoli XV-XVIII)*, in *Il diritto patrio. Tra diritto comune e codificazione (secoli XVI-XIX)*, ed. by Italo Birocchi and Antonello Mattone, Roma, Viella, 2006, pp. 297-353.

¹⁴ KARL APPUHN, *Inventing Nature: Forests, Forestry, and State Power in Renaissance Venice*, «The Journal of Modern History», LXXII (2000), n. 4, pp. 861-889; FABIEN FAUGERON, *De la commune à la capitale du Stato di Terra: la politique annonnaire et la constitution de l'État de Terraferme vénitien (1ère moitié du XV^e siècle)*, in *Les villes capitales au moyen âge*, ed. by Patrick Boucheron, Denis Menjot and Pierre Monnet, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006, pp. 97-111.

¹⁵ FILIPPO DE VIVO, *Ordering the Archive in Early Modern Venice (1400-1650)*, «Archival Science», X (2010), n. 3, pp. 231-248; ALFREDO VIGGIANO, *Le carte della Repubblica. Archivi veneziani e governo della Terraferma (secoli XV-XVIII)*, in *La documentazione degli organi giudiziari nell'Italia tardo-medievale e moderna*, ed. by Andrea Giorgi, Stefano Moscadelli and Carla Zarrilli, Roma, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2012, pp. 359-379.

¹⁶ SANDRA TOFFOLO, *Cities Dominated by Lions: The Fifteenth-Century Venetian Mainland State Depicted by Inhabitants of the Subject Cities*, «Viator – Medieval and Renaissance Studies», XLVI (2015), n. 1, pp. 305-325; NICHOLAS DAVIDSON, «As Much for Its Culture as for Its Arms». *The Cultural Relations of Venice and its Dependent Cities, 1400-1700*, in *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400-1700*, ed. by Alexander Cowan, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2000, pp. 197-214.

¹⁷ GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *La terraferma veneta del Quattrocento e le tendenze recenti della storiografia, in 1509-2009. L'ombra di Agnadello: Venezia e la Terraferma*, ed. by Giuseppe Del Torre and Alfredo Viggiano, Venezia, Ateneo Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2011, pp. 29-32.

¹⁸ To name but two series of studies on different *Terraferme*: SERGIO ZAMPERETTI, *I piccoli principi. Signorie locali, feudi e comunità soggette nello Stato regionale veneto dall'espansione territoriale ai primi decenni del Seicento*, Venezia, Il Cardo, 1991; GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *Comuni cittadini e stato regionale: ricerche sulla terraferma veneta nel Quattrocento*, Verona, Libreria Editrice Universitaria, 1992.

to rely more heavily on the mediation of local powers, including the cities themselves and their *contadi*, as well as some of their essential components, such as the factions and mountain communities of the Bergamasco, or the urban and rural aristocracies of the Bresciano¹⁹.

In the face of such a wealth of studies, the process through which Venetian expansion in the region was first negotiated remains unclear²⁰. It is often said that by putting an end to the campaigns recounted above, the treaty of Ferrara ratified the handover of eastern Lombardy to the Venetians (1428), while the peace of Lodi sanctioned it further in the eyes of the whole peninsula (1454). But what did this truly mean for the political geography of northern Italy? What did the acquisition of Bergamo, Brescia and later Crema actually entail for the spatial dimension of the *Terraferma*, and how exactly did it take place? As the first fruits of a much larger inquiry into the spatial fabric of the peninsula, this essay considers the conflicts and peace-making efforts of the first half of the *Quattrocento* to investigate the process through which Venice and Milan reshaped the political geography of northern Italy. In line with recent studies by French historians²¹, the essay seeks to uncover the processes through which territories were annexed and frontiers moved before modernity, while also contributing to the recent revival of interest in the mechanics of medieval and Renaissance peace-making²². Special attention will be paid to the range of practices and ideas

¹⁹ For the Bergamasco: IVANA PEDERZANI, *Venezia e lo "Stado de Terraferma": Il governo delle Comunità nel Territorio Bergamasco (secc. XV-XVIII)*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1992; PATRIZIA MAINONI, *Le radici della discordia. Ricerche sulla fiscalità a Bergamo tra XIII e XV secolo*, Milano, Unicopli, 1997; and PAOLO CAVALIERI, *"Qui sunt guelfi et partiales nostri". Comunità, patriziato e fazioni a Bergamo fra XV e XVI secolo*, Milano, Unicopli 2009. For the Bresciano: DANIELE MONTANARI, *Quelle terre di là dal Mincio. Brescia e il contado in età veneta*, Brescia, Grafo, 2005; STEPHEN BOWD, *Venice's Most Loyal City. Civic Identity in Renaissance Brescia*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2010; and *Sommersi e sopravvissuti. Istituzioni nobiliari e potere nella Brescia veneta*, ed. by Daniele Montanari, Brescia, Torre d'Ercole, 2017.

²⁰ Significantly, some of the studies touching upon these aspects are now a half or even a whole century old: ROBERTO CESSI, *Venezia alla pace di Ferrara del 1428*, «Archivio Veneto», XXXI (1916), n. 2, pp. 321-371; FELICE FOSSATI, *Francesco Sforza e la pace di Lodi*, «Archivio Veneto», XCV-XCVI (1957), nn. 1-2, pp. 15-34.

²¹ *Se donner à la France? Les rattachements pacifiques de territoires à la France (XIVe-XIXe siècle)*, ed. by Jacques Berlioz and Oliver Poncet, École Nationale des Chartes, 2013; STÉPHANE PÉQUIGNOT, PIERRE SAVY, *Annexer? Les déplacements de frontières à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018.

²² Starting from collections such as *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Mid-*

employed in doing so, and to the extent to which they were informed by the specificities of the areas concerned (the second *Terraferma*).

Throughout, an attempt will be made to consider peace treaties not as self-contained units, but as systems of documents: formal records which both relied and gave rise to several other writings, including previous drafts and subsequent copies, as well as negotiation minutes and diplomatic correspondence more broadly. Specifically, the essay's first section will consider the dealings that surrounded the treaty of Ferrara, the actors and mediators involved in its settlement, and the criteria which ultimately guided their actions. In an attempt to explore both the theory and the practice of territorial negotiations, the essay will consider instances in which their choices were driven by the application of general principles as much as by immediate exigencies. The second section will shift focus from the treaty of Ferrara to the peace of Lodi, whilst recounting the changing geopolitics of this tumultuous period. Here, we shall especially look for the devices and frames of reference adopted to sanction the new political geography of northern Italy. Lastly, the essay's third and final section will examine the proceedings through which treaties such as that of Lodi were implemented in the localities, so as to assess the role of peripheral bodies in enacting changes driven by a centre.

Mediation and Jurisdiction in the Treaty of Ferrara

The treaty of Ferrara was the first in a series of agreements which were employed extensively throughout the *Quattrocento* (and beyond) to trace the contours of the polities they concerned. By the spring of 1428, Venice had re-captured Brescia with a dramatic siege and was about to dispatch three patricians to take charge of Bergamo. Filippo Maria Visconti, on the other hand, was now keen to reach terms, especially after the defeat of Maclodio. He had already agreed to retreat from central Italy and to finalise his truce with Savoy by marrying the count's daughter²³. By tying up these loose ends, the treaty brought a season of intense military conflict, economic disruption and political instability

dle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Diana Wolfthal, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000; and now *A Cultural History of Peace in the Renaissance*, ed. by Isabella Lazzarini, London, Bloomsbury, 2020.

²³ Especially telling are some of the instructions sent by the duke to his ambassadors at the court of the soon-to-be holy roman emperor. Sigismund had proved hesitant to intervene against

to a close. Much to the chagrin of Filippo Maria Visconti, contemporaries were anticipating a period of renewed harmony between the Italian powers. The above may well explain the great level of detail found in the treaty: this was a text designed to address a dangerously fluid situation and to prevent – with little success, as we will see – any future confrontation²⁴.

Another element denoting the distance between Ferrara and previous treaties is the presence of a papal legate as arbitrator. While it was not a novelty to request that the pope supply a mediator, it was far more common to call upon the head of a neighbouring state²⁵. According to Isabella Lazzarini, it was the «flexibility and openness of the whole peninsular system of powers [that] allowed third parties to intervene as mediators»²⁶. Houses like the Este of Ferrara had a long tradition of intervention in foreign politics, truces and border negotiations. Was it one of several ways in which less powerful actors preserved their influence on the political stage. In the early 1380s, for instance, the marquis Niccolò d'Este had settled a major territorial dispute between Venice and the Carrara of Padua, who were then siding with Genoa in the War of Chioggia. The marquis boasted personal knowledge of the contested areas and could rely on the assistance of scholars with direct access to preceding pacts and conventions. On the occasion, he accepted his designation with the goal, as he put it, of preserving peace and harmony among his neighbours²⁷.

For his part, the papal legate appointed to mediate the treaty of Fer-

Venice, therefore Filippo Maria's requests for help had become ever more defeatist by the late 1420s: *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivi milanesi*, II, ed. by Luigi Osio, Milano, Tipografia Bernardoni, 1872, pp. 260, 335, 351, 364, 373 and 444.

²⁴ *Corps Diplomatique du Droit de Gens*, II, ed. by Jean Dumont, Amsterdam, 1726, pp. 208-215, 19 April 1428.

²⁵ For the limited developments of papal diplomacy over the long fifteenth century, see BERNARD BARBICHE, *Les "diplomates" pontificaux du Moyen Âge tardif à la première modernité: office et charge pastorale*, in *Offices et papauté (XIV^e-XVII^e siècle): charges, hommes, destins*, ed. by Olivier Poncet and Armand Jamme, Rome, École française, 2005, pp. 357-370. Thereafter, papal legates came to play a more flexible role, as discussed by CHRISTIAN SCHNEIDER, "Types" of peacemakers: exploring the authority and self-perception of the early modern papacy, in *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, pp. 77-104.

²⁶ ISABELLA LAZZARINI, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 119.

²⁷ VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato* (henceforth ASVe), Copie dei Pacta, reg. 6, cc. 141r-144r, 16 October 1381.

rara, Niccolò Albergati, proved to have a different view of the settlement, and indeed of his very role in the process. He argued that discordance was an «enemy to all mankind» and that the peace reached through his involvement would benefit the whole of Italy²⁸. These claims speak to the new policy of wide-ranging intervention adopted by Pope Martin V (especially in the wake of the challenges posed by conciliarism), but they also suggest that the Ferrara settlement was far from just a local and temporary affair in the eyes of contemporaries²⁹. Albergati himself was a man of renowned stature, one who could boast an unrivalled experience in peace negotiations. In the early 1420s, his first appointment as papal legate had been to visit Burgundy, France and England to act as a mediator in the aftermath of the treaty of Troyes, and later in the events following the death of Henry V³⁰. By the late 1420s, few other people in Rome could match his diplomatic prowess. In recognition of his experience, Pope Martin raised him to the college of cardinals and dispatched him once again as his legate to settle the conflict between the Venetians, the Florentines, and the count of Savoy, on the one hand, and Filippo Maria Visconti on the other.

Although an initial agreement was reached only at the end of December 1427, Cardinal Albergati met with the deputies of the four powers throughout the summer and autumn of that year³¹. On paper, this preliminary pact was framed as a series of resolutions (*arbitramenta*) adopted by a judge (the cardinal) in the presence of witnesses (the deputies of Milan, Venice, Florence and Savoy). While the minutes recording what was discussed have not survived, we know that the Venetian Senate rejected multiple drafts of the *arbitramenta*, suggesting that

²⁸ *Corps Diplomatique*, II, p. 203, 30 December 1427: «inimicus humani generis».

²⁹ On the vicissitudes of the Church in the 1420s and Pope Martin's new policies, see BRIGIDE SCHWARZ, *Die Organisation der päpstlichen Kurie und die aus dem Schisma herrührenden Probleme*, in *Alle origini della nuova Roma: Martino V (1417-1431)*, ed. by Maria Chiabò, Giusi D'Alessandro and Paola Piacentini, Roma 1992, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, pp. 329-345; and broadly PETER PARTNER, *The Papal State under Martin V: the administration and government of the temporal power in the early fifteenth century*, London, British School at Rome, 1958, pp. 42-52.

³⁰ On Albergati's European missions, see MARGARET HARVEY, *Martin V and the English, 1422-1431*, in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, edited by Christopher Harper-Bill, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1989, pp. 60-62; and especially ROBERTA BERTUZZI, *Le legazioni in Europa del cardinale Niccolò Albergati*, in *La chiesa di Bologna e la cultura europea*, Bologna, Barghigiani, 2002, pp. 89-105.

³¹ *Corps Diplomatique*, II, pp. 203-207, 30 December 1427.

the path to their final approval had been far from straightforward³². Traditionally, historians have paid most attention to the text of the treaty itself, dated April 1428, where the parties seem to be playing a more active role³³. But it is actually through the pact of December 1427 that the thorniest issues, and particularly those concerning borders and territorial arrangements, were raised and settled.

The most pressing matter was the fate of Brescia, now solidly under Venetian control. The *arbitramenta* required the duke to confirm the surrender of the city and its dependent territory. To avoid any doubt, the latter was qualified as «*districtus, comitatus, episcopatus seu diocesis Brixie*», and said to comprehend different sorts of settlements (*terrae, castra, loca*) as well as a variety of natural elements (*aguae, valles, montes*)³⁴. In addition, the Venetians would be given control over bodies that enjoyed fiscal and jurisdictional independence from Brescia. By discussing the fate of these bodies separately from that of the city, the text of the pact makes it clear that the area acquired by Venice did not come down to the *contado* alone; it concerned other major territories which, although they were located within the limits of the old *districtus*, benefited from some sort of autonomy from the city itself. In 1427, this was notably the case of federations such as that of the populous Val Camonica, home to at least 7,000 people by the end of the century³⁵. This large Alpine valley had once been directly subject to Brescia, but had long since acquired a degree of independence from the city thanks to charters granted first by the emperor and later by the lords of Milan. During the conflict between the Duchy and the Republic, this led the assembly of all the communities in the valley, headed by the most influential family in the area (the Federici), to act as an independent party and assert their separation from Brescia once again³⁶.

In the Bergamasco, the city could not match Brescia's effective control over the settlements surrounding the urban centre (*terrae, castra, loca*). Likewise, only a handful of Bergamasque valleys could boast the

³² ASVe, Senato Secreti, reg. 10, cc. 97v-146r, 1 November 1427-7 May 1428.

³³ *Corps Diplomatique*, II, pp. 208-215, 19 April 1428.

³⁴ Ivi, p. 204, 30 December 1427.

³⁵ ANTONIO MEDIN, *Descrizione della città e terre bresciane nel 1493*, «Archivio Storico Lombardo», XIII (1886), n. 3, p. 678.

³⁶ On the Val Camonica, its separation from Brescia, and the role of local families in its attain-

political autonomy and clear-cut territorial arrangements enjoyed by the Val Camonica³⁷. As a result, in the negotiations of 1427 the Milanese deputies were able to question the very extent of the Bergamasco. They did so by raising doubts over the submission of some minor bodies to Bergamo and thus to Venice. Territorial ambiguity had greatly increased over the previous few decades. For the most part, this was a by-product of the fact that the Visconti has ruled over both the Bergamasco and the Milanese for a long time, something which partially blurred the boundaries between the two *contadi*. More importantly, a distinctive feature of the Visconti's policies in the Bergamasco had been the attempt to govern local bodies, such as valley federations and small towns, without resorting to the mediation of the city. In so doing, the Visconti were able to balance the relationships between the urban centre and rural bodies, while also asserting their position as a superior power. In the long run, these policies legitimised rural bodies as alternative forms of territorial organisation and lessened the importance of their original affiliation to the *contadi* of Milan and Bergamo³⁸.

During the negotiations that led to the *arbitramenta* of December 1427 and later when drafting the treaty itself, in April 1428, two territories in particular were in dispute. As shown in Figure 1, the first was the town of Martinengo, some fifteen miles south of Bergamo; the second was the valley of San Martino, a federation comprised of a dozen villages located between the foothills of the Alps and the left side of the river Adda, not far from Lecco. The agreement of 1427 required the cardinal to act as judge in case anyone found reason to doubt the mean-

ment and subsequent negotiation, see IRMA VALETTI BONINI, *Le Comunità di valle in epoca signorile. L'evoluzione della Comunità di Valcamonica durante la dominazione viscontea (secc. XIV-XV)*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1976; and MASSIMO DELLA MISERICORDIA, *I nodi della rete. Paesaggio, società e istituzioni a Dalegno e in Valcamonica nel tardo medioevo*, Morbegno, Ad Fontes, 2012.

³⁷ For comparison, see DIEGO PARZANI, *Il territorio di Brescia intorno alla metà del Quattrocento*, «Studi Bresciani», XII (1983), pp. 49-74; alongside LELIO PAGANI, *Bergamo "Terra di San Marco". Processi territoriali nei secoli XV-XVIII*, in *Storia economica e sociale di Bergamo*, III, ed. by Aldo De Maddalena, Marco Cattini and Marzio Achille Romani, Bergamo, Fondazione per la storia economica e sociale di Bergamo, 1995, pp. 10-57.

³⁸ For an overview of these developments in the Bergamasco, see GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *Considerazioni introduttive: Bergamo e la Montagna nel Medioevo. Il territorio orobico fra città e poteri locali*, «Bergomum», CV (2010), pp. 7-20; together with GIORGIO CHITTOLINI, *Legislazione statutaria e autonomie nella pianura bergamasca*, in Id., *Città, comunità e feudi negli stati dell'Italia centro-settentrionale (secoli XIV-XVI)*, Milano, Unicopli, 1996, pp. 105-125.

ing of the text, particularly where this concerned the new borders between states («occasione confinium»)³⁹. Up to that point, the deputies of Venice and Milan had found no common ground on the fate of Martinengo and the San Martino valley, so the cardinal had to assemble them again in May 1428, only a few weeks after the conclusion of the treaty⁴⁰.

Although the deputies could not reach an agreement over these territories, they did agree that the criterion to be adopted for establishing which polity should control them was their original affiliation with one of the old *contadi*. On one side, the Venetians argued that both the *terra* of Martinengo and the *universitas* of San Martino belonged to the Bergamasco and, as such, should be assigned to the Republic. On the other, the deputies of Filippo Maria Visconti, whose armies still controlled both the town and the valley at this stage, contended that they had long been part of the Duchy. The Venetians' claim that Martinengo and the valley had once been directly subject to the city of Bergamo was correct. However, their counterparts could still argue that both territories belonged to the Visconti dominion by playing on the double meaning of "Duchy". In the fifteenth century, as Jane Black has demonstrated, "Duchy" could stand for the regional state under the rule of the duke, which had comprised the territories in question for a long time, as well as for the *districtus* of the city of Milan, namely the much more limited Milanese *contado*, which – on the contrary – had never extended as far as Martinengo or the Val San Martino⁴¹. In this sense, the claim that these territories were once part of the duke's dominion (the larger Duchy) was true but offered no leverage to the Milanese delegation. What mattered was the original affiliation of these territories to one of the old *contadi*, which explains why they were prepared to lie about them being part of the Milanese *districtus* (the smaller Duchy).

Since the two positions were irreconcilable, the last word was left to, Niccolò Albergati. One way in which the cardinal could have ruled was by applying the right of conquest. This would have sanctioned the duke's control over Martinengo and the San Martino valley while con-

³⁹ *Corps Diplomatique*, II, p. 206, 30 December 1427.

⁴⁰ ASVe, Miscellanea (henceforth M), b. 35, 5 May 1428.

⁴¹ JANE BLACK, *Double duchy: the Sforza dukes and the other Lombard title*, in *Europa e Italia. Studi in onore di Giorgio Chittolini*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2011, pp. 15-27.

firming that the rest of the Bergamasco would remain under Venetian rule. Alternatively, one might have expected the cardinal to determine the arrangement of the new state borders in compliance with certain geographical features, starting from the river Adda. Since its course runs along the full length of the Val San Martino, this would have made both the valley and the town of Martinengo part of the Venetian *Terraferma*. At the time, however, other principles informed the settlement of border disputes. The first is well-known among medievalists: it is the notion that instead of judging in favour of one of the parties involved, a settlement should find a compromise that was satisfactory to all of them⁴². The second, as we have seen, was the idea that pre-existing territories and particularly the old *contadi* should be used as the first point of reference. In the text recording the outcome of this last series of negotiations, dated May 1428, one can see the extent to which the cardinal and his secretaries were guided by these principles. The ducal forces had put substantial effort into capturing and retaining the town of Martinengo, which at this point remained a Milanese stronghold within the area controlled by the Venetian armies. Yet the cardinal had no qualms about restating its original affiliation with Bergamo, which meant that Filippo Maria Visconti was expected to surrender the town to the Venetians. Conversely, the San Martino valley was said to have been united with the *contado* of Milan in the past («tamque unita ducati Mediolani») and was thus judged to belong to the duke («spectare et pertinere ad illustrissimum dominum ducem»)⁴³.

On the whole, the dealings surrounding the treaty of Ferrara, between December 1427 and May 1428, offer a first glimpse into the negotiation of borders and political spaces in late medieval Italy. They show that aside from the old *contadi*, state deputies referred to several smaller bodies to describe the territorial modifications brought about by Venice's expansion in eastern Lombardy, and thus also to locate the new borders between the two states. Instead of describing the enlarged shape of the Venetian *Terraferma* against the shrinking dominion of

⁴² On this second principle, see LUCIANO MARTONE, *Arbiter - Arbitrator. Forme di giustizia privata nell'età del diritto comune*, Napoli, Jovene, 1984, pp. 103-29; and CHRISTOPH KAMPMANN, *Arbiter und Friedensstiftung. Die Auseinandersetzung um den politischen Schiedsrichter im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001, pp. 26-65.

⁴³ ASVe, M, b. 35, 5 May 1428.

the duke of Milan, negotiators continued to refer to pre-existing territorial units. With regard to the Bresciano, where the city's *contado* could boast a certain degree of internal unity, the treaty of Ferrara only needed to mention that except for separate bodies, such as the Val Camonica, all the localities immediately «obedient to Brescia», as chronicles and scribes then put it, were now under Venetian rule⁴⁴. By contrast, the less coherent composition of the Bergamasco made the negotiators shift their focus from the level of the *districtus* to that of intermediate units (the town of Martinengo, the valley of San Martino). In both cases, they were applying a principle which we could define as one of jurisdictional affiliation: as long as a body's original association with a city's *contado* could be determined, its fate as a territory subject to one of the two dominions could be decided.

Geopolitics and Scale in the Peace of Lodi

The second treaty of Ferrara (1433) and especially the treaty of Cremona (1441) had a far less transformative impact on the political geography of northern Italy⁴⁵. One must wait until the peace of Lodi (1454) for another portion of the Duchy – the town of Crema and its territory – to be annexed to the Venetian dominion, and with that, for the new state frontier to see a second and final shift. This is not to say that the 1430s and 40s were not riddled with changes in their own right. The politics of the peninsula were reshaped by the arrival of new actors on the Italian stage; however, the spaces within which they acted remained largely the same⁴⁶. Next to Alfonso the Magnanimous, who

⁴⁴ Consider how these developments are described in a contemporary epitome from the ducal archives: «relassa el dicto Duca de Milano a la signoria de Venexia Bressa e lo bressano e ogni terra obediente a quella»; together with the similar expression employed by a Venetian chronicler a few decades later: «tutti li luoghi sui utili dove dar obedientia a Bressa». The quotes are drawn from minutes published in *Documenti diplomatici*, II, p. 367; and from the account of the year 1428 in BNM, Cod. It. VII, 1827 (=7620), «Annali di varii successi di guerre in Lombardia et Marca Trivisana cominciando l'anno 1237 per tutto agosto 1509».

⁴⁵ The two treaties can be found respectively in *Corps Diplomatique*, II, pp. 258-265, 26 April 1433; and *ivi*, III, pp. 108-115, 20 November 1441.

⁴⁶ Far more exhaustive interpretations of the politics of this period can be found in GIORGIO CHITTOLINI, *Tra Milano e Venezia*, «Bergomum», XCV (2000), nn. 1-2, pp. 11-35; and FRANCESCO SOMAINI, *Filippo Maria e la svolta del 1435*, in *Il ducato di Filippo Maria Visconti, 1412-1447. Economia, politica, cultura*, ed. by Federica Cengarle and Maria Nadia Covini, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2015, pp. 107-166.

had conquered Naples and transferred the court of Aragon there, this was famously the case of Francesco Sforza. Over just a few decades, the low-born *condottiere* had risen to marry the only daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti and eventually take possession of the Duchy itself. His success was achieved not only through marriage and military prowess, but also thanks to his ability to carve out a reputation for himself as a legitimate player on the Italian chessboard. This led to him arbitrate the peace of Cremona in 1441 and, more importantly, to establish a special relationship with the Medici – something which later prevented the alliance between Florence and Venice, which had sustained so many wars in northern Italy, from ever forming again⁴⁷.

In the spring of 1450, following his triumphal entry in Milan, the position of Francesco Sforza as duke was still far from stable; however the desire for peace and order was tangible. Shortly after his accession, the *condottiere* dispatched three envoys to the Venetians, charged with the task of discouraging them from renewing their military efforts against the Duchy. Although their reports back to Sforza are often encrypted, signalling that relations were still quite tense, they provide us with a window into the contrasting positions held by the two leaderships at this time. Where Sforza was desperate to ensure stability and establish clear areas of influence in northern Italy, the Venetians, who were well-aware of the precariousness of his position, were considering to take up arms in Lombardy once again. On the night of 22 June, in a meeting that lasted until the early hours of the morning, the Milanese envoys laid out their case very plainly: «waging war against one's neighbours – they argued – spread war everywhere and up to the stars», but this time, they reminded the Venetians, the duke would have the support of many friends, and particularly of those that «felt hatred and envy towards the lordship of Venice» (the Medici of Florence)⁴⁸. What

⁴⁷ On Francesco Sforza and his rise to power (in Lombardy) and influence (in the whole of Italy), see VINCENT ILARDI, *The Banker-Statesman and the Condottiere-Prince: Cosimo de' Medici and Francesco Sforza (1450-1464)*, in *Florence and Milan: comparisons and relations*, II, ed. by Craig Hugh Smyth and Giancarlo Garfagnini, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1989, pp. 217-239; and GEORGES PEYRONNET, *Un virtuose de la guerre et de la paix au quattrocento: François Sforza*, «Fifteenth Century Studies», XIX (1992), n. 1, pp. 191-208.

⁴⁸ MILANO, *Archivio di Stato* (henceforth ASMi), Carteggio Sforzesco (henceforth CS), b. 340, 23 June 1450: «la guerra coi vicini si tirava dietro la guerra d'ogni luogo infino alle stelle [...] altri che portavano odio et invidia alla loro illustrissima signoria».

ensued is fairly well-known. The Milanese delegation failed to convince the Venetians and war resumed for another two years, from 1452 until 1454, when the peace of Lodi brought the protracted conflict between the Duchy and the Republic to a close.

At the outset, the treaty was simply a bilateral agreement between the two northern powers. Nevertheless, the degree to which the politics of the peninsula were intertwined soon brought other major actors onto the scene to ratify its terms. Each had specific reasons for doing so: the pope was hoping to have his claims over central Italy recognised, Alfonso was looking to be acknowledged as a peer by the peninsular powers, and the Medici in Florence were keen to cash in their bet on Francesco Sforza. While pursuing their own motives, all these actors sought to achieve the same two goals⁴⁹. The first was a confirmation of their status. Unlike the city-states before them, many of the regional dominions established between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries lacked formal legitimation. Due to the number of actors involved, the peace of Lodi offered the ideal platform for mutual recognition. The second goal was preventing a single power from overcoming the others. The propaganda orchestrated by Milanese and Florentine humanists against Venice's putative dream of conquering the whole peninsula is the most striking evidence of the reality of these worries⁵⁰. Still, given the scope of the struggle discussed earlier, it is not hard to believe that the desire for stability went well beyond political contingencies. Peace, Sforza told a confidant after the conclusion of the treaty, was the legacy he meant to leave his progeny, so that «his children, their children and all their descendants until the sixth generation would not see any other war in Lombardy»⁵¹.

To prevent further conflicts, Venice and Milan (the powers most involved in the struggles of the first half of the century) had to put an unprecedented effort into defining the limits of their respective do-

⁴⁹ The key studies are all by RICCARDO FUBINI, *Italia quattrocentesca. Politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Milano, FrancoAngeli 1994, though see especially ID., *The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo de' Medici*, «The Journal of Modern History», LXVII (1995), supplement, pp. 166-199.

⁵⁰ NICOLAI RUBINSTEIN, *Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion in the Fifteenth Century*, in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. by John Rigby Hale, London, Faber and Faber, 1973, pp. 197-217.

⁵¹ ASMi, CS, b. 341, 21 April 1454: «li filioli de li filioli loro infino a sexta generatione mai ne vederano più guera in Lombardia et questa è la heredità che volgino lassare a li suoi figlioli».

minions. At this stage, as Michael Mallett wrote so lucidly, «their concern was not to annihilate their rivals, but to achieve security and predominance within clearly defined spheres of influence»⁵². In this respect, coupled with the Italian League, the peace of Lodi marked a significant break from previous treaties: it enshrined the regional dimensions of five major states (Venice, Milan, Florence, Rome, and Naples) whilst preserving the autonomy of less extended polities, which were now formally protected from further invasion and from the ambitious plans of belligerent *condottieri*⁵³. While seeking to prevent future conflicts, the peace of Lodi was an agreement that looked consistently to the past: it approved the territorial modifications sanctioned by previous treaties – notably Ferrara (1428) and Cremona (1441) – and more importantly, for the theme of this inquiry, it adopted the same criteria when doing so.

To start, the negotiations that led to the final draft of the treaty are a testament to the widespread use of older units to anchor new territorial modifications. For example, when it first came to negotiating the limits of his newly acquired dominion, in the early months of 1454, Francesco Sforza proved unwilling to yield strategic territories, including several transit valleys in the Alps. At the same time, he was open to surrendering other assets, such as the group of communities that went under the name of Geradadda. These rich and populous centres were traditionally attached to the *contado* of Cremona, but their location just south of the Bergamasco, on the eastern bank of the river Adda, made them hard to defend from an attack. This suggests that the duke was open to the possibility of abandoning a portion of the Cremonese (the Geradadda) to retreat to the protection offered by the river. More importantly, it shows that much like the San Martino valley in 1428, an aggregation of communities such as the Geradadda served as the next

⁵² MICHAEL MALLET, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London, The Bodley Head, 1974, p. 2.

⁵³ On this system and the politics of the Lodi settlement, see MARIA NADIA COVINI, *Political and Military Bonds in the Italian State System, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, in *War and Competition between States*, edited by Philip Contamine, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 9-36; and ANN KATHERINE ISAACS, *Sui rapporti interstatali in Italia dal medioevo all'età moderna*, in *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. by Giorgio Chittolini, Anthony Molho and Pierangelo Schiera, Bologna, il Mulino, 1994, pp. 113-132.

available spatial reference when a city's *contado* (the Cremonese) happened to be fractured⁵⁴.

In the end, the final draft of the treaty ruled that the Geradadda would remain with the Duchy, together with a few other towns that were also traditionally attached to the Cremonese (Pandino, Agnadello, and Mozzanica). However, doubts remained as to who should be awarded possession of several other villages in the area⁵⁵. As in the case of the negotiations following the treaty of Ferrara, the issue was tackled not by drawing a line across the Cremonese, but by establishing the jurisdictional affiliation of the contested localities («loci de debato»)⁵⁶. Much like Cardinal Albergati in 1428, the negotiators gathered at Lodi were not concerned with the localities' current state of subjection to the Duchy, but with whether or not they belonged to the ancient *contado* of Cremona. Similarly, localities which were found to be extraneous to the Cremonese were not simply assigned to the Republic, but united with the nearest Venetian territory: that of Crema. Like the Geradadda, the Lombard town had long enjoyed jurisdictional separation from Cremona and functioned as an administrative centre for the surrounding villages. As a result, the peace of Lodi could state that these localities should be subject to Venice precisely «because of the jurisdiction of Crema»⁵⁷.

In essence, as the records in Figures 2 and 3 illustrate, establishing the new frontier between the Duchy and the Republic in eastern Lombardy came down to negotiating lists of territories whose jurisdictional affiliation needed to be determined. These could vary in scale and de-

⁵⁴ The episode is discussed in full in PAOLO MARGAROLI, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali: le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italica (1450-1455)*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1992, p. 120. While this study uses almost exclusively Milanese evidence, a Venetian perspective on the negotiations can be found in the old treatment by FEDERICO ANTONINI, *La pace di Lodi e i segreti maneggi che la preparano*, «Archivio Storico Lombardo», LVII (1930), pp. 233-296.

⁵⁵ On these towns and villages and their relationships with Cremona, see GIORGIO CHITTOLINI, *Centri minori del territorio: terre "separate", piccole città*, in *Storia di Cremona*, VI, ed. by Id., Azzano San Paolo, Bolis, 2008, pp. 64-79; and ANDREA GAMBERINI, *Rivendicazioni urbane, autonomie locali e interventi ducali: il Cremonese nel Quattrocento*, in Id., *Oltre le città. Assetti territoriali e culture aristocratiche nella Lombardia del tardo medioevo*, Roma, Viella, 2009, pp. 53-81.

⁵⁶ ASMi, CS, b. 1525, s.a.

⁵⁷ *Capitula Pacis Factae in Civitate Laudeae die IX Aprilis Anno MCCCCLIV*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XVI, ed. by Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Mediolani 1730, coll. 1013-14: «la giurisdizione e dominio resti ad essa Illustrissima Signoria di Venezia per la giurisdizione di Crema».

gree of autonomy. When possible, the chancellors and deputies involved would refer to earlier urban frameworks. According to the treaty, Francesco Sforza was expected to return all the towns and villages he controlled in the Bergamasco and Bresciano, thus restoring the original extension of the two *contadi*; conversely, Venice had its hold over the Cremasco recognised. While adopting the limits of large urban districts, the peace of Lodi also made use of smaller territories to fix the shifting frontier between the two states. In doing so, the Milanese and Venetian delegations were able to move the negotiations from the level of the *districtus* to that of more compact bodies, such as the intermediate aggregation of the Geradadda. If these were not available, negotiators were left with no choice but to drill down to the level of the individual localities, as in the case of the villages of the Cremonese mentioned above. In sum, much like the treaty of Ferrara, the peace of Lodi employed different spatial scales to describe the political geography of the 1450s, while again adopting the principle of jurisdictional affiliation to place small and large territories in relation to each other.

Trading Territories, Shifting Frontiers

The role of smaller territories in defining the new political geography of northern Italy can be explored further by looking at how the terms of the treaty were later implemented. Specifically, the moment in which the arrangement of state borders effectively shifted is traceable to a unique series of proceedings. Depending on the party recording the event, these are known in the sources as either *consignationes* or *acceptationes*. While they were ostensibly public ceremonies, they bore a remarkable resemblance to a practice commonly conducted between private individuals. This practice is what medieval notaries called *confessio*: the deed through which a person acknowledged that they had received an agreed sum in fulfilment of a preceding transaction – a payment receipt, essentially⁵⁸. At this stage, public treaties such as the peace of Lodi were still framed as an agreement between private parties. The negotiation of the treaty was led by deputies who acted in the name

⁵⁸ A description of this practice and some detailed evidence of its longevity in the region can be found in STEFANIA SALVI, *Tra privato e pubblico. Notai e professione notarile a Milano (secolo XVIII)*, Milano, Giuffrè, 2012, pp. 181-182.

of the duke or doge, rather than as representatives of abstract political communities⁵⁹. Where public treaties took after private contracts, it should not come as a surprise that mechanisms such as the notarial *confessio* may have informed the proceedings through which authority over territorial units was effectively transferred⁶⁰.

In practice, trading territories required two deputies (*procuratores*) to convene in the space that was the object of the transaction. Here, they would gather local representatives to witness the event. These were typically prominent landowners, members of the clergy and often also people with sound knowledge of the landscape. In compliance with the terms of the treaty, one agent would then deliver (*consignare*, hence *consignatio*) the territory in question to his counterpart, who in turn would publicly acknowledge its receipt (*acceptatio*, hence *acceptationes* – or indeed *confiteri*, hence *confessio*). One heeds only to look at the language used to describe them to get a sense of how much these ceremonies were shaped by contractual practices. Several clues can be found in the reports sent to Milan by the deputies who were travelling «from place to place to execute and bring to an end the restitution of all those localities of the Bresciano» and of the Bergamasco⁶¹. In them, the deputies presented their activities as involving the transfer of certain lands (*certe terre*) which they duke owed (*debito*) and the Venetians were meant to receive (*credito*)⁶². To put it briefly, contemporaries saw the trading of territories as the act of balancing debt and credit in lands.

Although drawing on private practices, these proceedings served the

⁵⁹ Scholars of international law have talked about sovereigns as «treaty partners» to frame the role of rulers in transactions of this kind, though see notably WILHELM G. GREWE, *The Epochs of International Law*, ed. by Michael Byers, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2000, p. 196. Still, differences remained across Europe, starting from the practice of having treaties ratified by parliaments and assemblies in some kingdoms, as discussed by THEODOR MERON, *The Authority to Make Treaties in the Late Middle Ages*, «The American Journal of International Law», LXXXIX (1995), n. 1, p. 2.

⁶⁰ On the intermingling of these different traditions, see KARL-HEINZ ZIEGLER, *The influence of medieval Roman law on peace treaties*, in *Peace Treaties and International Law in European History: From the Late Middle Ages to World War One*, ed. by Randall Lesaffer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 147-161; and RANDALL LESAFFER, *The Medieval Canon Law of Contract and Early Modern Treaty Law*, «Journal of the History of International Law», II (2002), pp. 178-198.

⁶¹ ASMi, CS, b. 341, 14 April 1454: «de loco et loco per exequire et dare fine alla restitutione de quillli lochi de Bressana».

⁶² *Ibid.*

same purpose as other public deeds, starting from the so-called acts of surrender (*deditiones*). These were the material result of the process through which a city framed its subjection to a higher power, typically a prince (the duke of Milan) or a dominant centre (the *commune* and later *signoria* of Venice)⁶³. As much literature has already shown, these acts allowed cities to bargain for their rights and duties within the larger polity, while the polity itself gained the opportunity to publicly assert its authority over them. In this sense, *deditiones* and *consignationes* had fundamentally the same function: they sanctioned a change in the ownership of jurisdiction over a subject body, while also recognising its existence as a distinct unit. But where a *deditio* allowed cities to negotiate their place within the larger polity, a *consignatio* transferred territories from one power-holder to another without much consultation. Thus, the proceedings discussed above kept together the double nature of *iurisdictio* – territorial and personal at the same time – by channelling territorial authority over a given body from the original power-holder (the duke) to his deputy on site, then to the corresponding deputy for the other party, and finally to the new power-holder (the doge)⁶⁴.

The proceedings were conducted by high-calibre representatives, documented by local notaries and subsequently recorded by central chanceries. Given what was at stake, the Venetians deployed a large group of deputies to receive the remaining localities of the Bresciano and the Bergamasco. These were headed by one of the architects of the Lodi settlement: Paolo Barbo. In March 1454, while receiving his mandate to negotiate the treaty, the patrician had already been instructed to receive *in manibus* any sort of territorial gain resulting from its ap-

⁶³ These acts and the surrounding negotiations have already drawn much attention from scholars of the *Terraferma*, which is why they do not figure more prominently in this treatment. See notably ANTONIO MENNITI IPPOLITO, *Le dedizioni e lo stato regionale. Osservazioni sul caso veneto*, «Archivio Veneto», CLXII (1986), n. 2, pp. 5-30; GHERARDO ORTALLI, *Entrar nel dominio: le dedizioni delle città alla repubblica serenissima*, in *Società, economia, istituzioni. Elementi per la conoscenza della repubblica veneta*, I, ed. by Antonio Politi and Antonella Lazzarini, Sommacampagna, Cierre 2002; pp. 49-62; and now also MONIQUE O'CONNELL, *Voluntary Submission and the Ideology of the Venetian Empire*, «I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance», XX (2017), n. 1, pp. 9-39.

⁶⁴ On the personal and territorial nature of *iurisdictio* in medieval political thought, see DIEGO QUAGLIONI, *Giurisdizione e territorio in una "quaestio" di Bartolo da Sassoferrato*, «Archivio Scialoja-Bolla», II (2004), n. 1, pp. 1-16; and generally PAOLO COSTA, *Iurisdictio: semantica del potere politico nella pubblicistica medievale, 1100-1433*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1969.

plication⁶⁵. He was also responsible for updating the duke on the progress of the proceedings, as is evident from some of the numerous letters he sent him⁶⁶. As he fulfilled his mission, Barbo issued the Milanese chancery with written acknowledgments of the completion of the two most important proceedings: one for the Bresciano and another one for the Bergamasco. The chancery labelled them as acts of acceptance (“instrumenta acceptationis”) and soon transcribed them in registers containing other solemn texts, such as the treaties themselves and the verdicts of preceding arbitrations⁶⁷.

At first glance, the drafting of two distinct acts, and with that the holding of two separate ceremonies, may seem to reflect the sustained primacy of urban frameworks: the Bresciano and the Bergamasco. However, the headings assigned to these documents by Milanese chancellors already reveal which bodies they were really about. The first is entitled «act of acceptance regarding the said localities of the Bergamasco»⁶⁸; the second is said to concern all the «lands held by the most illustrious duke in the Bresciano»⁶⁹. This shows that the *contadi* of Bergamo and Brescia were still used as the most inclusive references, even though the transaction only concerned smaller territories within the two *districti*. These were the *loca* and *terrae* still held by the duke in the area, despite Venice controlling the rest of the two *contadi* (not to mention the cities themselves). For this reason, referring to the *districtus* as a whole was not a viable option, so lower levels of description were, once again, adopted.

The handover of the ducal possessions in the Bergamasco occurred on 17 April, only a week after the conclusion of Lodi (9 April 1454)⁷⁰. Although the document is said to concern all the localities still held by the duke in the area, the proceedings took place in the village of Calozio, in the San Martino valley, and specifically in the garden of the Benagli family. Throughout the first half of the century, the valley had

⁶⁵ ASMi, CS, b. 1524, 28 March 1454.

⁶⁶ Notably ivi, b. 1568, 17 April 1454; and ASMi, Frammenti di Registri Visconteo-Sforzeschi, b. 1, f. 12/4, 18 April 1454.

⁶⁷ ASMi, Registri Ducali (henceforth RD), reg. 18, cc. 387r-388r.

⁶⁸ Ivi, c. 387r, 17 April 1454: «instrumentum acceptationis infrascriptum locorum omnium Pergamensi».

⁶⁹ Ivi, c. 388r, 29 April 1454: «terrarum tenebantur per illustrissimo domino ducem in agro Brixiensis».

⁷⁰ ASMi, RD, reg. 18, c. 387r, 17 April 1454.

been fiercely contested because of its strategic position – just south of Lecco and off the Adda's eastern bank (fig. 1)⁷¹. Having fought in the area himself, Francesco Sforza knew well the advantages of controlling a bridgehead on the opposite side of the river; in the end, however, the support lent to Venice by families such as the Benagli tilted the balance in favour of the Republic. Owing to the retreat of the ducal forces, the eastern boundary of the Val San Martino (not far from the river itself) was to become the new state frontier. This explains why the ceremony was held in Calolzio: both sides needed to engage with the territory in question, while also securing the support of local powers⁷². In light of this, it is not surprising that families who had sided with Venice during the last war (notably the Benagli, Lazzona and Rota) provided four of the five witnesses taking part in the proceedings. The notary in charge of the deed (Alberto Rota) was also a member of one of these families, whereas a second notary (the *magister* Giovanni Corti) was involved most likely on account of his professional acquaintance with the area⁷³.

In the Bergamasque proceedings, the San Martino valley provided a spatial reference which was much more manageable than that of the entire *districtus*, but also not as minute as that of the individual villages. By contrast, the area of the Bresciano still controlled by the duke featured no intermediate bodies; as a result, the deputies were left with no choice but to list all the individual villages (*loca*), fortifications (*castra*), and towns (*terrae*) set to be transferred from one party to the other⁷⁴. This time, the ceremony took place in Brescia. Although the city itself

⁷¹ Local historians have worked extensively on these vicissitudes. See especially VIRGINIO LONGONI, *Fonti per la storia dell'alta Valle San Martino*, II, Calolziocorte, Comunità Montana Valle San Martino, 1988; and FABIO BONAITI, *Val San Martino: una terra di mezzo*, in *Naturalmente divisi. Storia e autonomia delle antiche comunità alpine*, ed. by Luca Giarelli, Tricase, Ista, 2013, pp. 189-204.

⁷² The same could be said about Martinengo. Only a week later, the town was the object of a separate *consignatio* in the presence of local witnesses: ASVe, M, b. 39, 24 April 1454. Unlike the Val San Martino, Martinengo was not controlled by the duke at this stage but by the condottiere Bartolomeo Colleoni, who had recently abandoned Sforza to fight for Venice. A separate ceremony was thus necessary, since jurisdiction over the town had to be transferred first from the condottiere to the duke and then from the duke – or, better still, his deputy – to the corresponding deputy sent by Venice.

⁷³ Judging from a surviving notebook, few others could match his familiarity with the lands and villages that made up the valley: BERGAMO, *Archivio di Stato*, Archivio notarile, b. 166.

⁷⁴ ASMi, RD, reg. 18, c. 388r, 29 April 1454: «*terrarum tenebantur per illustrissimo domino ducem in agro Brixiensis*».

had no part in the proceedings, the leaders of families with a significant stake in those territories, such as the Gambarara and the Martinengo, had taken up residency there. Much like the Benagli in the Bergamasque proceedings, they all feature prominently in the *consignatio* of territories where their influence was most felt. As shown in Figure 4, the localities still controlled by the duke in the area made up a consistent ring of settlements on the left side of the river Oglio. In the early 1450s, this created a fluid frontier in the midst of what was traditionally regarded as the *contado* of Brescia. Francesco Sforza was personally involved in snatching these towns and localities from Venetian control, as shown by his correspondence with on-site officials. Some were brought under ducal control by deploying armies; others were acquired *cum littere*, that is by enticing them with written promises of grants and privileges. By June 1452, the duke could boast of controlling over twenty-five localities beyond the Oglio⁷⁵. It follows that in enforcing the terms of the treaty, the proceedings of the *consignatio* were not only returning these territories to Brescia but shifting the frontier between the two dominions back to the banks of the river.

Both documents show that the territorial modifications framed by Lodi were implemented not through top-down impositions, but by performing the handover of individual units before the people who would be most affected by the change. Like the better-known *deditiones*, these proceedings asserted the primacy of regional powers over these lands, but they also ensured their jurisdictional identity, being as recognisable units within a *contado* or as legitimately separate bodies. Like the acts of surrender of some cities, they also acknowledged the role and position of local leaderships. As Sergio Zamperetti has shown for Vicenza and Gian Maria Varanini for Belluno, it was not uncommon for prominent families or local factions to play a key role in framing the surrender of urban centres⁷⁶. It seems that the same could be said of the acts through which the territories of smaller bodies were annexed to a new dominion. Finally, in shaping the relationship between a polity and its

⁷⁵ ASMi, Registri delle Missive, reg. 13, cc. 146r-146v, 10 June 1452.

⁷⁶ SERGIO ZAMPERETTI, *Vicenza e il Vicentino nello Stato veneziano. Una dedizione parentale?*, «Studi Veneziani», LXV (2012), pp. 613-624; GIAN MARIA VARANINI, *I ghibellini di Belluno e la cancelleria gonzaghesca al momento della prima dedizione a Venezia (maggio 1404)*, «Archivio Storico di Belluno, Feltre e Cadore», LXXVIII (2007), pp. 7-16.

new territories, these proceedings endorsed their spatial configuration. In the same way as the *deditiones* confirmed the integrity of the old city-states within the new regional dominions, the *consignationes* retained the individual status of smaller territorial bodies. Interestingly, the *instrumenta acceptationis* left out any detailed descriptions of these territories, as if their contours were already evident to all. This goes to show that when the ownership of jurisdiction changed hands, even though the borders between the Duchy and the Republic shifted, the familiar boundaries of the traded territories remained untouched. Together, the necessary involvement of local representatives and the preservation of pre-existing territorial arrangements are a testament to the extent to which the specificities of the «second *Terraferma*» informed Venice's attitudes towards the negotiations⁷⁷.

Conclusions

On the whole, this study has shown how treaties such as those of Ferrara and Lodi framed the establishment of a new political geography in northern Italy. They sanctioned the Venetian conquest of eastern Lombardy, but they also laid down, albeit in general terms, how it would affect the limits of the two dominions. This was not done by drawing a line of distinction between the Duchy and the Republic (from point A to point B, as we might do nowadays), but by listing the individual units under their rule (territories A, B, C, and D). From a legal perspective, these treaties were nothing but a public agreement through which the deputies of two private parties (the duke and the doge) reached an understanding over the content of such lists – often through the mediation of a third party (the papal legate). Since many of the geopolitical changes occurring in the first half of the *Quattrocento* were brought about by Venetian expansion, this process generally came down to listing the localities still held by the duke within areas now subject to the Republic (the Bergamasco, the Bresciano and, to a lesser extent, the Cremasco). In brief, the objects of territorial negotiations

⁷⁷ VARANINI, *La terraferma veneta del Quattrocento*, pp. 29-32. For a long-term perspective on these themes, consider also SERGIO ZAMPERETTI, *Dalla tutela cittadina all'identità politica territoriale. Il governo dei contadi nella Repubblica di Venezia in età moderna*, in *Organizzazione del potere e territorio. Contributi per una lettura storica della spazialità*, ed. by Luigi Blanco, Milano, Franco-Angeli, 2008, pp. 45-56.

were never the territories of the states themselves, but rather the territories of the plurality of bodies over which they ruled.

Both the final drafts of the treaties and the minutes of the negotiations that surrounded them employed a plurality of spatial references to describe territorial modifications. Where possible, they would adopt the city-state as the basic unit of description. They did so in two ways: by requiring the duke to pledge publicly to respect Venetian rule over Bergamo, Brescia and later Crema, and by obliging him to return all the towns and localities which he held within their respective districts. This restored the original shape of the territories which had once been subject to the city, making them an ideal reference for the extended Venetian dominion in the area. Another point worth noting is that this procedure reflected the seemingly spontaneous capitulation of the individual city-states. Proud as they were of their independent past, the *civitates* would not accept being treated as mere objects of a transaction – something that Venice, for its part, was more than happy to indulge, particularly if it led to an act of spontaneous surrender (*deditio*). This explains why the treaties appear to sanction a handover that had already taken place: they only confirm Venice's hold over Brescia, Bergamo and Crema, since in the eyes of these *civitates* – not to mention Venetian propaganda – they had already offered themselves spontaneously to the Republic.

Yet the territories of the former city-states were not the only units in play. Faced with the challenge of describing more subtle changes in territorial arrangements, the negotiators behind the treaties of Ferrara and Lodi made use of a broad array of spatial references. As the negotiation of each treaty unfolded, the description moved from the level of the *civitas* (Bergamo, Brescia, Crema) to that of the intermediate body (the San Martino valley, the town of Martinengo, the federation of Geradadda) and finally to the level of the local community (as in the case of those contested villages of the Cremonese), thus showing a clear understanding of the territorial hierarchy of the time. Most of these bodies could not claim to be giving themselves freely to the Republic, in the same manner as the cities had done earlier through an act of surrender, so the treaties themselves played a proactive role in prescribing which of the two powers should now rule over these lands. This process added spatial complexity to the texts of both treaties, as the negotiators took care to list the individual bodies that, though formerly attached to a

city-state, were now to be directly subject to a regional polity – especially when this was a different polity than before.

Still, the treaties only went as far as to prescribe territorial modifications; they framed geopolitical changes but did not put them into operation. The effective transfer of territorial authority over these lands took place only after the conclusion of each treaty, following the proceedings known as *consignatio*. This required the deputies of the duke and the doge to meet publicly in front of local representatives to perform a ritual delivery of the territories in question. Thus, the boundaries between pre-existing bodies acquired a new, public significance (that of distinguishing regional dominions) only when the convention between superior powers was enforced in the localities. When the possession of certain units changed hands, the frontier between the two polities was redesigned, but the boundaries of the single units remained unaltered. In the end, the cities, towns and villages of eastern Lombardy joined the bulk of the Venetian dominion almost like tiles added to a mosaic; as such, they would retain their spatial configuration for years to come.

ABSTRACT

Per gran parte d'Italia, la prima metà del Quattrocento fu un periodo di grandi trasformazioni. Mentre un numero sempre più ridotto di stati si espandeva su spazi sempre più vasti, gli interstizi che li dividevano furono progressivamente riempiti e gli stati stessi si trovarono ad affacciarsi l'uno sull'altro. Al nord, questo processo portò la repubblica di Venezia e il ducato di Milano a scontrarsi per il dominio sulla Lombardia orientale – specie le città e i territori di Bergamo, Brescia e Crema. Quando i Veneziani riuscirono finalmente a sottrarre queste zone al controllo dei Visconti, la frontiera fra i due domini fu spostata verso occidente e la geografia politica della regione fondamentalmente ridisegnata. Non era che l'ultimo passo verso la costruzione dello stato veneziano di *Terraferma*. Il primo tassello di una vasta indagine sul tessuto spaziale dell'Italia tardomedievale, il presente saggio considera le guerre e i processi di pacificazione attraverso cui Milano e Venezia negoziarono questi profondi cambiamenti. In questo contesto, l'articolo esamina i testi di trattati ben noti (come quelli di Ferrara e Lodi) a fianco di una serie di fonti tratte dagli archivi veneziani e milanesi. Così facendo, il saggio getta luce sui meccanismi attraverso cui i territori erano annessi e le frontiere spostate nell'Italia del tempo, e allo stesso tempo rivela la gamma di attori coinvolti, nonché le tecniche e i principi adottati durante i procedimenti.

For much of Italy, the first half of the *Quattrocento* was a transformative period. As fewer and fewer states came to expand their dominions over larger and larger spaces, the interstices between them were eventually filled up and the polities of the peninsula put in direct competition with each other. In the north, this process brought the Republic of Venice and the Duchy of Milan into conflict over eastern Lombardy – namely the cities and territories of Bergamo, Brescia and Crema. Once the Venetians were finally able to wrest these areas from the Visconti's grasp, the frontier between two dominions was fundamentally shifted and the political geography of the region redesigned. It was but the final step towards the establishment of Venice's *Terraferma* state. The initial product of a larger investigation into the spatial fabric of late medieval Italy, the present article considers the conflicts and peace-making efforts through which Milan and Venice negotiated these profound changes. It does so by examining the text of well-known treaties (such as those of Ferrara and Lodi) alongside several other records from both Milanese and Venetian archives. This is to shed light on the proceedings through which territories were annexed and frontiers moved in late medieval Italy, while also uncovering the range of actors involved, and the series of principles and techniques they adopted to accomplished their goals.



1. A slightly modified version of an eighteenth-century map of the Bergamasco, highlighting Bergamo and the location of the San Martino valley (to the left) and the town of Martinengo (to the right). The map first appeared in Vincenzo Formaleoni, *Descrizione topografica, e storica del Bergamasco dedicata alli tre stati generali della provincia medesima*, Venezia 1777.



4. A slightly modified version of an eighteenth-century map of the Bresciano, highlighting Brescia and the location of the towns and villages controlled by the duke of Milan at the time of the peace of Lodi. The map was made in 1701 at the request of the French king. It is now held in PARIS, *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, Département Cartes et plans, GE DD-2987 (5232); and published here courtesy of <http://gallica.bnf.fr>.