

# **An Attempt at Modernizing the Use of Assets in Italian Nation Building. The Boncompagni Ludovisi Family (1841-1896)**

Stefano Palermo

*Pegaso University, Naples, Italy*

## ABSTRACT

This contribution attempts to analyze some of the features connected with the aid the great private assets gave to the Italian nation building process during the first post-Unity decades. The most recent historiography puts under the limelight how, between 1861 and 1893, from Italian Unification until the “end of the century crisis” the building process for a new national credit market, as well as for a new banking and financial system, themselves able to support the manifold industrialization process then active in the country, were aided by greater private assets, namely those held by noble families. Such a contribution was by no means a linear one; rather it was very articulated and changed significantly with each specific case, following both innovative strategies and enhanced preservation of assets.

In order to single out a possible case study, my contribution intends to analyze the management evolution and investment strategies of the assets of the Boncompagni-Ludovisi family between 1841 – before Italian Unification and 1896 – i.e., until the “end of the century crisis”. Such a viewpoint appears particularly meaningful, not only because it concerns some of the most significant assets of the time – with strong roots in the area around Rome and a good presence in other regions- but also because, between 1883 and 1896, this family began, making good use of its contacts in the changing real estate market, began to modernize the use and the distribution of their assets. However, such an action was bound to clash both with the “weight of tradition” within the family and with the fall of the financial and banking system.

## 1. The contribution of the assets belonging to noble families towards Italian nation building

Analyzing Italian economic development during the earlier post-Unification decades and the features of its *catching up* towards the core of the more industrialized countries during the economic cycle of the Second Industrial Revolution may contribute to defining some of the paths to development Italy took, both in the medium and in the long term: the role of the state, the localization and specialization of industries, the contributions of the primary sector, the birth of a “Southern Question” within the national framework and, last but not least, the birth of the Italian banking system. Such elements are closely connected with the articulated and complex Italian process of *nation building*, which had its moments of acceleration, crisis and consolidation. Interpreting such complexity can also require an attempt at a long-term interpretation of historical processes.

In such a context, Italian economic development of the last thirty years of the 1800s can also be read in the light of the modernity/tradition debate; this kind of approach may also be useful within a comparative framework in order to fully understand the path which led Europe to widespread industrialization and the positioning of the different countries (or their developing sectors).

Such a reading can also be accompanied with an analysis of those changes happening also in areas further from industrialization centres, such as the former Papal States<sup>1</sup>. It goes without saying that the coexistence of modernity and tradition is a typical feature of all those processes involving economic and social development. From a certain point of view, innova-

---

<sup>1</sup> On this, please see G. Pescosolido, “Il Mondo economico romano e la sfida della modernizzazione”, in *Roma fra la Restaurazione e l’elezione di Pio IX*, edited by A.L. Bonella, A. Pompeo, M.I. Venzo, Rome-Freiburg-Wien 1997, pp. 397-410.

tion and tradition appear as the main cornerstones – by no means the only or the more basic ones – of a path in which historical events happen and are recorded.

In such a context, the evolution of the economic structure undertaken by the territories of Latium in their transition from the Papal States to the Kingdom of Italy, and with them, the great assets managed by noble families, may prove useful in fully understanding some of the phenomena which featured in the evolution of the newborn Italian state after 1870.

In particular, the access of Roman society (through its different social classes) to the financial system of unified Italy may prove interesting, especially when connected with the simultaneous formation of a national market for both credit and industry. As the literature on the subject has shown in recent years<sup>2</sup>, the history of the assets managed by noble families is

---

<sup>2</sup> Among the most important studies of the subject, please see G. Pescosolido, *Terra e nobiltà. I Borghese*, Rome 1979; *Tra rendita e investimenti. Formazione e gestione dei grandi patrimoni in Italia in Età Moderna e Contemporanea*, Acts of the Third Meeting of the Italian Society of Historical Economy, 22-23 November 1996, Bari, 1999; L. Alonzi, *Famiglia, patrimonio e finanze nobiliari. I Boncompagni, secoli XVI-XVIII*, Manduria-Bari-Rome, 2003; P. Boutry, "Nobiltà romana e Curia nell'età della Restaurazione. Riflessioni su un processo di arretramento", in *Signori, patrizi e cavalieri nell'età moderna*, edited by M.A. Visceglia, Rome-Bari, 1992, pp. 390-422; M. Caffiero, "Tradizione o innovazione? Ideologie e comportamenti della nobiltà romana in tempo di crisi", in *Signori, patrizi e cavalieri nell'età moderna*, edited by M.A. Visceglia, cit., pp. 369-389; A.L. Cardoza, "La ricchezza e i ricchi a Torino", in *Società e storia*, n. 68, 1995, pp. 297-340; A. Ciuffetti, "Modelli familiari, comportamenti demografici e politiche patrimoniali della nobiltà in Umbria: secoli XVI-XIX", in *Proposte e ricerche*, XX, 38, 1997, pp. 26-88; D. Felisini, "Quel capitalista per ricchezza principalissimo". *Alessandro Torlonia principe, banchiere, imprenditore nell'Ottocento romano*, Rome-Soveria Mannelli, 2004; N. Flores, "Dalla terra all'edilizia. L'avventura speculativa di Paolo Borghese", in *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea*, X, 3, 2002, pp. 583-610; A.M. Girelli, *Le terre dei Chigi ad Ariccia*, Milan, 1983; N. La Marca, *La nobiltà romana e i suoi strumenti di perpetuazione del potere*, Rome, 2000; L. Laudanna, "Le grandi ric-

an important feature of this interpretation of the Italian economic system as it appeared during the mid-1800s, when – for example – the birth of the financial and credit markets was made easier also by the contribution of great landowners during the early post-Unification decades with the double aim to diversify their investments and to join the new Italian *élites*.

Even if such a process was complex and by no means homogeneous, analyzing the evolution of the management forms of these assets may prove useful in understanding if, and eventually how, they took part in the significant changes of those decades. On this subject, the Roman case appears paradigmatic in many of its features. By the same token, it can be meaningful to try to understand the characteristics of such case and its effect, especially concerning the types of investment. Since the involvement of an important part of the Roman nobility and landowners – albeit on different levels and with various results – in both the real estate-based and financial activities of the first three post-Unification decades is historically taken for granted, we should wonder if such a phenomenon caused a relocation in wealth, as well as whether and how it affected the workings of the local economies. Furthermore, one might wonder if, in those conditions, the (economic) behaviour of the noble *élites* were driven by the will – or the skill – to use the resources at their disposal to start innovative forms of capitalist interventions.

---

chezze private di Roma agli inizi dell'Ottocento", in *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, n. 2, 1989, pp. 104-152; S. Licini, *Milano nell'Ottocento: élites e patrimoni*, Milan, 1994; M. Malatesta, *Le aristocrazie terriere nell'Europa contemporanea*, Rome-Bari, 1999; G. Nenci, *Aristocrazia romana tra 800 e 900. I Rospigliosi*, Ancona, 2004; Ead. (Edited by), *Nobili e borghesi nel tramonto dello Stato Pontificio, "Roma Moderna e Contemporanea"*, XVI, 2008, 1; R. Romanelli, "La nobiltà nella costituzione dell'Italia contemporanea", in *Storia Amministrazione Costituzione. Annale dell'Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica*, n. 3, 1995, pp. 247-267; Id., "Urban Patricians and 'Bourgeois' Society: a Study of Wealthy Elites in Florence, in «*Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, n. 1, 1995, 1, pp. 3-21.

## **2. The structure of the assets belonging to the Boncompagni family before and after Italian Unification (1841-1883)**

To try and empirically verify these themes, it may be useful to analyze a case study, not in order to define a general model, but rather to offer some useful elements for a comparative analysis. Therefore, the case of the Roman branch of the Boncompagni-Ludovisi family and their involvement in the building boom following the establishment of Rome as the capital of the then – nascent Italian state has been analyzed. Such a viewpoint proves to be useful not only quantitatively – considering the sizable capital which was deployed – but is also important to understand what kinds of investment choices were actually carried out with the profits arising from speculative overbuilding. Last – but by no means least – considering the assets' management from a longer term – i.e. starting from some decades before Italian Unification – will allow further study and understand the basic reasons for the choices made during the 1880s. It has been possible to recreate these financial dynamics by cross-referencing several sources, amongst which are the documents for the assets belonging to Don Antonio III (Prince of Piombino, Tuscany, from 1841 to 1883), held within the Secret Vatican Archives and those concerning the financial movements of Rodolfo, his heir, held within the Vatican and the Historical Archive of the Bank of Italy.

By this means, it has been possible to recreate the dynamics concerning the most important forms of investment and capital management within the family between 1841 and 1896 (when some of the arrears due by Don Rodolfo during and after the period of speculative overbuilding were paid off) bringing the three main forms of allocation in the limelight, i.e. rural properties, urban properties and property assets. Likewise, it has

been possible to recreate a probable trend (albeit not a thorough one) tracing the evolution of both income and expenditures.

The first image of the assets belonging to the Boncompagni family comes from the will opened finally – according to the rules of the *fideicommissum* – on 10 May 1841 upon the death of Luigi Boncompagni, father of Antonio III<sup>3</sup>. At the time, the Boncompagni family already numbered among the most important landowners in Latium and in the Roman countryside with only the Borghese and Torlonia families ahead of them according to Villani's estimates<sup>4</sup>. The documents concerning the aforementioned allow us to reveal the origin of those capital assets belonging to the family, highlighting the importance which Don Luigi also gave to the integrity and the transmission of family assets<sup>5</sup>, complying with both the centuries-old

---

<sup>3</sup> On the succession of 1841, please see the Vatican Secret Archives (VSA, from now on), namely Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 888, n. 1, Ristretto e Bilancio del libro de' Capitali attivi e passivi spettanti a S.E. il principe di Piombino dal 10 maggio 1841 al dicembre 1842; *Ibid.*, prot. 585, n. 20, Capitali attivi e passivi eredità di Don Luigi Boncompagni Ludovisi; *Ibid.*, prot. 582, Inventario dei beni della Ch.ma Don Luigi Boncompagni Ludovisi, Parte prima; *Ibid.*, prot. 583, Inventario dei beni della Ch.ma Don Luigi Boncompagni Ludovisi, Parte seconda; *Ibid.*, prot. 887, n. 5, Patrimonio Boncompagni Ludovisi. Notizie varie, Roma, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> On the presence and distribution of landownership in Latium, please see P. Villani, "Ricerche sulla proprietà e sul regime fondiario del Lazio", in *Annuario dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea*, XII, 1960, pp. 97-263 (pp. 239-240). For further information on the matter during the post-Unification period, please see F. Gurreri, "Immagini statistiche del Lazio dall'unificazione nazionale ai nostri giorni", in *Il Lazio. Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità ad oggi*, edited by A. Caracciolo, Turin, 1991, pp. 597-653.

<sup>5</sup> About 33,7% of the asset rule could be traced to the primogeniture established by the Prince between 1829 and 1834. To this figure should then be added the assets the family gained in the Abruzzi region and received by the Kingdom of Naples as compensation for the loss of the Duchy of Sora and Arcein 1796,

tradition of the family and the true-and-tested behaviour of aristocracies. Actually, following the heritage subdivisions, the part belonging to the new Prince of Piombino grew to 84,5% of the whole heritable estate, worth 2.081.000 Italian scudi in capital assets and 176.738 Italian scudi in liabilities<sup>6</sup>.

The structure of capital assets was likewise comparable with traditional aristocratic management, within which farmsteads and rural assets were the budgetary cornerstones; suffice it to say that, in December 1842, these sources of income were worth 1,4 million scudi, that is to say 66,5% of the whole estate. Such an estimate was on par with (if not greater than) that of the great landowning Italian nobility<sup>7</sup>. Then came, ma-

---

themselves equivalent to 7.1% of the total and transferred directly to the family's eldest son in February 1835, as seen in prot. 708, 31 dicembre 1814, *Compensazione per la perdita del Ducato di Sora*; the notary deed establishing the transfer to Luigi can be found in *Ibid.*, prot. 630. Furthermore, 29,6% of the total could be traced to "Operation Tuscany", i.e. those purchases made after 1816, when the House Boncompagni succeeded in getting compensated by the powers taking part in the Congress of Vienna for its loss of the Principality of Piombino in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars (on the negotiations held during the Congress of Vienna for the Principality of Piombino, please see *Ibid.*, prot. 394-396. The farmsteads and rural assets were worth 14,7% of the total; after that came the primogeniture belonging to Don Antonio "senior", the grandfather of the new Prince assessed up to 4,5% of the total assets; the primogeniture belonging to Duke Giacomo Boncompagni in Modena and Bologna, making up 2,8%; and other, comparatively smaller, assets. Villa Ludovisi, the main household of the family, was assessed around 1% of the total assets. The main activities outside real estate, such as tithes and offerings, exchanges and interest-bearing credits, as well as every kind of funded debt made up to 5,7% of the entire heritable estate.

<sup>6</sup> VSA, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 888, n. 1, *Ristretto e Bilancio del libro de' Capitali attivi e passivi spettanti a S.E. il principe di Piombino dal 10 maggio 1841 al dicembre 1842*.

<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of the assets belonging to the Rospigliosi family, Mr. Nenci highlights the crucial importance of agrarian income, even when urban income grew. Just to consider the data concerning other Italian important cities, the ef-

king up 13,7% of total assets, the rents, long leases and domains; the urban assets followed (estimated at 13,1% of the total capital assets); finally, there was the estimate of Villa Ludovisi, amounting to 31.000 scudi (i.e., 1,5% of the total). Within Don Antonio III's financial plan, about 40.000 could be ascribed to "rents and interest-bearing credits". Those, added to the 67.000 scudi of the Papal States debenture stocks, brought the complex worth of the real estate operations to 106.500 scudi (that is to say 5,1% of capital assets). All in all, these activities still fell under the traditional form of finance variously carried out by the Roman middle and high aristocracy, according to its different conditions<sup>8</sup>. Analyzing the liabilities, assessed as being worth 176.738 scudi, it may be noticed how the greater part was due to dowries and will-related taxes (77% of the total); then followed the stipends and the annuities which the family had to provide (11% of the total), whereas the rents and leases to be paid amounted to 4,5% and 6,3% respectively. Ove-

---

fective impact of rural assets in the properties of noble families amounted to 56% in Turin, to 58% in Milan and to 52% in Florence (Please see G. Nenci, *Aristocrazia romana tra 800 e 900. I Rospigliosi*, cit., p. 127). For an effective overview of some of the case studies please see, among others: A. Ciuffetti, "Modelli familiari, comportamenti demografici e politiche patrimoniali della nobiltà in Umbria: secoli XVI-XIX", in *Proposte e ricerche*, cit., pp. 26-88; S. Licini, *Milano nell'Ottocento: élites e patrimoni*, cit.; R. Romanelli, "Urban Patricians and 'Bourgeois' Society: a Study of Wealthy Élites in Florence", in *Journal of Modern Italian History*, cit.

<sup>8</sup> Please see D. Felisini, "L'economia dei servizi nello Stato Pontificio", in *Lo Stato e l'economia tra Restaurazione e Rivoluzione*, vol. 2, *L'industria, la finanza e i servizi (1815-1848)*, edited by I. Zilli, Naples, 1997, pp. 249-289 (pp. 281 and following); R. D'Errico, "Il prestito tra privati a Roma attraverso le fonti notarili e fiscali del XVIII-XIX secolo", in *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea*, II, 1994, 1, pp. 139-152; *Idem.*, "Intermediazione privata e innovazione creditizia a Roma nella prima metà dell'Ottocento", in *Roma fra la Restaurazione e l'elezione di Pio IX*, edited by A.L. Bonella, A. Pompeo, M.I. Venzo, cit., pp. 475-511 (pp. 494 and following).

rall, some of the peculiar features of the landowning aristocracy of the time are evident: a strong reliance on land property – even in the supra-regional milieu – a good range of urban properties, useful not only for raising yearly incomes but also to highlight the presence of the family in the Italian capital, a partial liquidity diversification, be it in the stocks of debenture and in those forms of financial investment which were more widespread or considered more profitable at the time by the aristocracy in Rome.

This was the situation in 1842. On 10 July 1883, when Don Antonio died, and before his heirs shared his legacy, it had significantly changed. Considering the balance sheet for 1883<sup>9</sup>, overall capital assets amounting to 20.155.223 Italian lire, the incidence of rural assets went down to 40,2% compared with the previous value of 66,5%, whereas the worth of the urban assets went up from 13,1% to 29,8%. It is also important to note that the worth of Villa Ludovisi, while having significantly increased its contribution to the overall balance sheet (from 1,6% of the total in 1842 to 8,2% in 1883), had been estimated at 1,6 billion Italian lire. This assessment was to increase fourfold two years later, during the distribution of the estate. Another surprisingly important factor, especially taking the events after 1885 into account, is the plunge in real estate activities, both concerning rents and credit (which went down to 0.1% from 1,9%) as well as the Italian debenture stocks held by the family, declined from 3,2% to 0,6%); the internal usage of these assets

---

<sup>9</sup> Please see VSA, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 584a, n. 1, *Verbale del congresso tenuto dagli eredi di Antonio III in cui si stabiliscono le norme per l'amministrazione del patrimonio ereditario, dandosi a tale scopo procura al Duca di Sora ed al P.pe di Venosa, e si prendono altre misure relative all'inventario ed alla futura divisione dei beni; Ibid.*, prot. 584a, n. 4, Roma, 3 giugno 1885, *Divisione della eredità lasciata dalla Ch.Me. Don Antonio Boncompagni Ludovisi*.

remains mostly unchanged between 1842 and 1883 (two thirds of the public debenture stocks belonging to the family and the remaining third covering rents and credits). Therefore, a shift seems to be at work here, at least concerning the net worth of the assets involved, from rural property to the urban one, whereas the plunge in real estate assets leaves them insignificant overall within the capital assets.

The drop in value experienced by the rustic assets belonging to the family was first and foremost due to the transfers under the principality of Antonio Boncompagni; these transfers caused a territorial – and somewhat patrimonial – regression in the family's estate by means of a divesting strategy, albeit one aiming to maintain the family estates in both Rome and Latium<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, an increase (both in absolute and relative terms) of urban assets. This trend was perfectly in line with the growth in real estate in XIX<sup>th</sup> Century Rome. As Mrs. Felisini proved, this market underwent a massive surge during the last decade of existence of the Papal States<sup>11</sup>. Between 1842 and 1883, the overall contribution of urban assets to the Boncompagni's budget grew, mostly because of the real estate built in Rome, whose incidence within the urban assets grew from 87% (in 1842) to 95% (in 1883). Analyzing the trends in the single budget entries for the 1841-1859 period<sup>12</sup>, it is possible to

---

<sup>10</sup> Between 1841 and 1883 the size of the Boncompagni estates went down to 15.596 from 20.724 hectares; in 1883, the economic value of the family's property raised by more than two thirds in Latium, especially in the Ager Romanus (an area where the family's presence remained constant during the forty years considered).

<sup>11</sup> Please see. D. Felisini, "Forme e tendenze dell'investimento immobiliare nella Roma dell'Ottocento", in *Città e Storia*, I, 2006, 1, pp. 157-165.

<sup>12</sup> Please see the VSA, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 888, f. 1, *Ristretto e Bilancio del libro de' Capitali attivi e passivi spettanti a S.E. il Principe di Piombino dal 1841 al 1859*.

notice that the reconfiguration of the family's assets in favour of extending their urban property had already begun during the second half of the 1840s, then gaining speed, especially after 1850. The aforementioned plunge of real estate activities highlights a diversifying trend, almost as if no overall strategy was present, confining these kinds of operation to economically favourable moments<sup>13</sup>.

The process of identifying and understanding the dynamics of such assets can be studied in further depth by analyzing income and expenditure, as well as cash flows. Such an understanding has been made possible – albeit somewhat partially – by an articulate set of documents<sup>14</sup>. In order to establish an initial comparison, there are the accounts concerning 1842, 1869 and 1881 (the latter is the last balance sheet available before Don Antonio died). The evolution of gross income highlights the rising dependence of the family on urban assets, as it happened in the balance sheets considered. Considering this action as a widening rather than a shift seems to be more

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, prot. 887, f. 6, *Bilancio dei canoni, censi e dei consolidati spettanti ad Antonio Boncompagni Ludovisi*.

<sup>14</sup> The available data concerning the evolution of income and expenditures during the principality of Don Antonio III are divided into two series featuring remarkable basic differences. In fact, for the first (1843-1856) it is only possible to recreate the gross income and annuities, as well as the assets-related taxes. The data concerning the other kinds of expenditures, such as those for assets management, for administration, for taxes and for family up keep (please see *Ibid.*, prot. 888, f.1). On the contrary, the financial statements regarding the second period considered (1866-1881) show a more complete image of the Boncompagni household, despite being based on budget plans rather than on the budgets themselves. Besides gross income, they include all the single expenditures (cfr. *Ibid.*, prot. 890, f. 10). Searching for and surveying other similar documents allowed us to find the sources for general income and expenditures for 1842 as well, allowing a more thorough comparison with the indicators of the second period, at least for that year (cfr. *Ibid.*, prot. 887, f. 3).

appropriate, since the decrease in the overall value of the family's rural assets (which went down from 66,0% in 1842 to 64,1% in 1869 and still dropped, to 58,8%, in 1881) happened during a rise in their value during the years after Italian Unification (the value rose from 447.467,6 Italian lire in 1869 to 465.920 lire in 1881, i.e. a growth of 6,5%). The overall contribution of income from urban assets rose from 11,7% in 1842 to 16,6% in 1869 reaching 26,2% in 1881, with a growth in their worth of 80,8% (from 114.810 to 207.665,7 Italian lire) for the post-Italian Unification years.

However, deflating the available data from 1881 to 1869<sup>15</sup>, the resulting value of the income from the family's urban assets is equally significant, even if actually lower (+43,5% between 1869 and 1881) and a negative trend may instead be noticed concerning the income from rural assets (undergoing a downturn of about 4,5%). The modifications within the structure of the family's assets are to be connected to a low margin of growth in the gross incomes arising from rural assets; such an indicator becomes negative if calculated at constant prices. This would better explain the importance of the afore-mentioned movements, transfers and shifts within the family's urban assets as a source for the movement of capital and income. Likewise, it may be important to notice the decrease in the real estate-related activities of the family (rents, credits, Italian state debenture stocks) whose contribution to the overall income went down from 15,1% in 1842 to 1,7% in 1869, down to 0,4% in 1881.

All in all, the family income grew by 14,9% in current prices between 1869 and 1881, but by just 3% if assessed at 1869 con-

---

<sup>15</sup> For the data on deflation, please see Istat (the main Italian statistics institute), "Il valore della moneta in Italia dal 1861 al 2005", in *Informazioni*, n. 21, 2006.

stant prices, going from 689.798 to 792.747 Italian lire in the first case and from 689.798 to 710.539 Italian lire in the second case. Considering the Boncompagnis, it is possible to notice a progressive increase in the contribution of the income arising from urban assets, both with respect to total income (it grows from 15% in 1842 to 20,4% in 1869, up to 30,3% in 1881). The growth in urban performances – and in the assets employed in this sector – was a general event interesting in the case of other aristocratic families, and not only in Rome<sup>16</sup>. The important feature in the case of the Boncompagni family is the sheer scale of this phenomenon: it is also worth noting that, between 1869 and 1881, the overall expenditures grew significantly, by about 25,7% (namely, from 604.415 to 759.579 Italian lire) if measured in current values and by 11,6% if considered in constant 1869 prices (namely, from 604.415 to 680.810 lire); both these values are greater than the other ratios (considering both constant and current prices) of overall income.

The drop in the “*Esuberanza di cassa*”, (i.e. the availability of liquid assets) entry, which decreased by 61,2% in current prices and 65,2% in constant prices during the period considered, may also be due to the same cause. Such a drop is a relative one, caused by the growth in taxes and in the sums to be variously allocated to family members (while, at the same time, the other expenditure-related entries were broadly steady or even lower). Between 1886 and 1881, the “*Esuberanza di cassa*” was mostly due to the income arising from urban assets, in the face of the plunge, in both absolute and relative terms – if calculated at constant prices – of the income arising from rural assets during a steady phase of the real estate and land belonging to the family. Such a process went on, albeit slowly, for the fif-

---

<sup>16</sup> Please see G. Nenci, *Aristocrazia romana tra '800 e '900. I Rospigliosi*, cit.

teen years considered, gaining speed during the second half of the 1870s (some years earlier than what happened for the Borghese family as researched by Mr. Pescosolido)<sup>17</sup>. Concerning the three aforementioned cornerstone years, it may be relevant to highlight how in 1842 the ratio between taxes and gross estate income amounted to about 16,4%, while in 1869 a small rise was recorded (18,3% in total); after 1870, the tax burden grew very significantly, as is shown both by studies in the field and by the analyses carried out on the estates of other noble families<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, it is not by chance that between 1869 and 1881, the income arising from the family's real estate after taxes – that is, subtracting the fixed expenditures arising from taxation – go up by 4,9% if calculated in current prices (namely, from 459.658 to 482.120 Italian lire) but, on the contrary they go down by 5,9% if calculated in 1869 constant prices (namely from 459.658 to 432.123 Italian lire).

---

<sup>17</sup> Please see G. Pescosolido, *Terra e nobiltà. I Borghese*, cit., pp. 185-213. Per alcune considerazioni generali di medio periodo sull'andamento della rendita e dei rendimenti agrari nel Lazio durante il XIX secolo, cfr. M. Caffiero, "L'agricoltura nello Stato Pontificio", in *Lo Stato e l'economia tra Restaurazione e Rivoluzione*, vol. 1, *L'agricoltura (1815-1848)*, edited by I. Zilli, cit. For a more general analysis of Italian agriculture during the mid-1800s, please see. G. Nenci, "Realtà contadine e movimenti contadini", in *Il Lazio. Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità ad oggi*, edited by A. Caracciolo, cit., pp. 169-251; G. Pescosolido, *Terra e nobiltà. I Borghese*, cit., pp. 216-219; C.M. Travaglini, *Analisi di un'agitazione contadina nella campagna romana*, Rome, 1981. For an effective summary of the historical debates on this subject, please see G. Federico, J. Cohen, *Lo sviluppo economico italiano 1820-1960*, cit., pp. 41-58.

<sup>18</sup> Please see G. Pescosolido, *Terra e nobiltà. I Borghese*, cit., p. 257; A.M. Girelli, *Le terre dei Chigi ad Ariccia*, cit., pp. 139-140; G. Nenci, *Aristocrazia romana tra '800 e '900. I Rospigliosi*, cit., p. 128).

### 3. The choices Rodolfo Boncompagni made: an attempt at modernization?

In 1883, Antonio III's death opened the first inheritance succession after the abolition of the *fideicommissum*; at the same time, many events, both external and internal to the history of the family had a hand in guiding the management of assets and the traditional investment strategies. Starting from the evolution of the economic context in the Italian capital – featuring the well-known speculative growth in the banking and real-estate market – Rodolfo Boncompagni, the new Prince of Piombino began to use and manage a series of assets in the real estate and banking sectors for increasing income levels; Rodolfo's main goal was to compensate for the “losses” the family estate suffered because of the new succession legislation and of the stifled growth – when not an outright decrease – of the income arising from the family's rural assets.

Two distinct phases, albeit connected to one another, can be found within Rodolfo's activity.

In the first, lasting from 1883 to 1887, the Prince started the well-known speculation on Villa Ludovisi, something that allowed him to cash a little more than five million lire in liquid assets. If such a speculative choice was already a cornerstone shift towards new forms of asset usage, it is exactly from this sum, and from the amounts of the other credits gained during the allotment phase (the second part, lasting between 1887 and 1892) that one may begin considering the way the family managed their investments.

In 1885, after a complex division of the heritable estate in which several factors crossed one another – first and foremost the end of the *fideicommissum* and the decision to begin the allotment of Villa Ludovisi<sup>19</sup> – Rodolfo Boncompagni's active ca-

---

<sup>19</sup> The choice to divest had already been taken in 1883 when, on the death of

pital amounted to about 61,5% of the heritable estate left by his father<sup>20</sup>. Of 15.552.123 Italian lire of active capital, Villa Ludovisi – bought almost entirely by Rodolfo, who bought out his brothers' shares – made up 37,6% of the whole family estate, followed by the rural assets with 33,5% and by the urban assets with 16,6%. The real estate assets (usufruct taxes and credits) amounted to 1,5%, a percentage that, when added to the value of the family's Italian state debenture stocks, amounting to 1,1%, brought the total value of such goods to a lower level than Don Antonio III had inherited in 1841. On the contrary, the volume of liabilities, amounting to 4.229.232 Italian lire, was significantly greater than in the past, not only because the liabilities he inherited (bequests, dowries and pensions contributed by 30% to the total liabilities), but for the cost of his brothers' shares of Villa Ludovisi.

The decision to sell the Villa can be traced back to several factors: amongst them the wish to build a new palace to serve

---

Don Antonio, his five sons decided to keep the heritable estate undivided for a transitional period of two years (on this, please see VSA, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 584a, n. 1, *Verbale del congresso tenuto dagli eredi di Antonio III in cui si stabiliscono le norme per l'amministrazione del patrimonio ereditario, dandosi a tale scopo procura al Duca di Sora ed al P.pe di Venosa, e si prendono altre misure relative all'inventario ed alla futura divisione dei beni*). The allotment contract with the Generale Immobiliare company was signed on 6 April 1885, that is, two months before the definitive agreement on the heritable estate among all brothers, which happened on July 1885 (please see *Ibid.*, prot. 614, n. 198, *Miscelanea relativa al nuovo quartiere Ludovisi. Rapporti col commissario Giacomelli e Società Immobiliare, piante e disegni*).

<sup>20</sup> See *Ibid.*, prot. 584 n. 2, 3 giugno 1885, *Conti degli Ecc.mi coeredi secondo l'istramento di divisione del patrimonio e variazioni sui capitali loro rispettivamente assegnati convenuti fra il Sig. P.pe di Piombino e gli altri coeredi con apoche private del giugno suddetto*. The estate belonging to Don Rodolfo was made up of 66,1% of all the rustic assets belonging to the family, by 53,1% of the urban assets, and by all the real estate assets; the firstborn received almost all of Villa Ludovisi (5.848.000 out of 6 million Italian lire).

as the family residence and the uncertainties looming over future family income, also in the face of heightened taxes on landowning. Furthermore, if widening of the strategy for more real estate investment was already present in the mind of Antonio III, in 1885 this was made easier and further encouraged by a crucial factor: the growth of speculation in real estate in Rome.

The cooperation with the company called Società Generale di Credito Immobiliare owned by Giuseppe Giacomelli (the so-called "Sociale Piombino-Immobiliare") went on, at least formally, until 1891. If during the first two years of cooperation, the operations of allotment went substantially smoothly, from the end of 1887 onwards, the real estate crisis put the operation in jeopardy, at least considering its original intentions. Between 1886 and 1889 Rodolfo exercised his right to receive several sales advances; a short time later, the impossibility of further progress convinced the parties to terminate the "Sociale". Overall, the Prince of Piombino had to receive 7.960.811 Italian lire for land divestiture, 378.750 lire for interest, 2.183.236 lire as net profit out of a total of 10.522.797 lire. However, Don Rodolfo never got this amount; he obtained about 5.500.000 lire instead for the land sales, a mortgage credit of 1.7000.000 lire from Paolo Borghese, a residual credit from the Immobiliare, assessed at 1.224.273 lire on September 1891 and about 30.000 square metres of unsold land (to be added to the about 47.000 square metres still belonging to the Prince). Such an income was considerable, but still under the provisions and, most importantly, was made up of credits hard to be collected (at least in the short term) and of fixed assets (such as the unsold lots) impossible to use immediately.

In such a context the use of financial and real estate assets by the Boncompagnis between 1887 and 1892 offered choices

for the Prince, his sons (Ugo and Ignazio) and his staff. Three factors overlapped which can be traced back to the conflict between tradition and the drive towards modernizing the financial tools that involved some of the Roman nobility during those years. Between 1887 and 1890, Rodolfo used the cash he received from the Società Immobiliare in order to end a part of the liabilities connected with the division of the heritable estate (1.120.000 Italian lire) and to buy new rural and urban assets (amongst them, the Quieta estate in the Italian region of Emilia, some houses in Rome and building the family residence in Via Veneto, in the Italian capital). However, the family still had more than 77.000 square metres of land to value, also in order to finance the building of the Via Veneto residence and to recover the costs Rodolfo incurred in buying out those fractions of Villa Ludovisi belonging to his brothers. In addition, since mid-1889 onwards, the Boncompagni family widened its scope in the field of real estate. To promote such an aim, the family bought the land bank shares of the then-nascent Istituto Italiano di Credito Fondiario, the shares of the Paris-listed Italian stocks rent and, above all, the use of about 11 million lire in subscribing to two new credit institutions, together with English and French capital: the Banca Inglese Italiana and Le Credit Société Financière<sup>21</sup>. These latter two institutions were the crowning achievement of another series of capitalizations, carried out, thanks to close cooperation with the Lazzaroni family, in some real estate banks established during the real estate speculative boom: the Società di Credito e Industria Edilizia and the Credito Industriale Romano. The association between these two families left a mark on the estates of both. The Boncompa-

---

<sup>21</sup> On the establishment of the Banca Inglese Italiana and the capitalization of the Credit Société Financière please see S. Palermo, *Terra, città, finanza. I Boncompagni Ludovisi di Roma (1841-1896)*, cit., pp. 146 and following.

gni and Lazzaroni families brought capital on behalf of these institutions buying market shares or – as was the case with the Banca Inglese Italiana – becoming directly their founders, in order to activate their assets in the land still unsold after 1887.

In order to finance these investments, between November 1891 and April 1892, Don Rodolfo took out several mortgages: amongst them, he underwrote a debt of 450.000 Italian lire with the Società Generale di Credito Mobiliare in December 1891, while, in February 1892, he obtained a loan of a million lire (which increased, in March of the same year, by another 700.000 lire) from the Banca Nazionale nel Regno, the national bank of the Kingdom of Italy. The mortgages taken out in November 1891 with the Credito Fondiario del Santo Spirito and in April 1892, with the Administration of the Holy See for 2.000.000 and 3.283.000 lire respectively were much more significant. The overall impression is that of an escalation of the real estate activities connected with the movements on residential zoning land and building lots, even after the burst of the real estate bubble.

The *Stati Patrimoniali*, i.e. the balance sheet of the Boncompagni household compiled in November 1892 gave a faithful picture of the situation following those, as well as other, operations<sup>22</sup>. First of all, it may be useful to describe its structure: the balance sheet was subdivided into two parts; one called “*Patrimoniale*” concerning the family property and one called “*Industriale*” detailing the family activities; the former featured assets of 25.545.335 Italian lire and liabilities for 12.449.682 lire<sup>23</sup>, whereas the latter (covering also the speculative real

---

<sup>22</sup> Archivio Storico Banca d'Italia, the Historical Archive of the Bank of Italy (from now on, HABI), Liquidazioni, Pratiche, 317, f. 1, 23 novembre 1892, Stato dei Capitali di Casa Boncompagni Ludovisi.

<sup>23</sup> The property-related part of the family balance sheet grew by about 3,3 mil-

estate activities of the family) had assets of 15.535.281 lire and liabilities of 10.202.924 lire<sup>24</sup>. Amongst these latter liabilities, held by the family's creditors there were, for more than 5 million lire, the Banca Nazionale, the Banca Romana, the Credito Fondiario del Banco di Santo Spirito, the Credito Mobiliare and the Banca Industriale e Commerciale.

Upon the completion of the 1892 balance sheet, the crisis of the Boncompagni-Lazzaroni group was substantially revealed and was held in check mostly through an overvaluation of real estate assets. The nominal value of the stocks held by the family provided the main collateral for the majority of the advances obtained from the unprivileged creditors. In the beginning of 1893,

---

lion lire thanks to the divestitures of Rodolfo's uncle, Baldassarre Boncompagni, made on behalf of his nephew in exchange for an annuity amounting to 141.000 Italian lire and the perpetual lease of the Aurora estates. Under the entry concerning the "Italian income" also appeared the 2.000 shares of the Istituto Italiano di Credito Fondiario which the family bought for 1.000.000 lire. The debt the Borghese prince had with the family was still recorded as amounting to 1.752.000 lire and therefore completely collectable: under the "Mortgages and interest bearing credits" there was the debt the Municipality of Rome had of 924.000 lire with the family following the divestiture of several roads in the Ludovisi quarter; under the entry for "Receivables" were still present those subsidies guaranteed by Don Rodolfo with the Credito Fondiario for more than 700.000 lire on behalf of the Sciolette e Sabatucci company for the renovation of what was the Villa Ludovisi. Under the entry for "passive capital" were the mortgages the family underwrote with the Holy See, the family dowries and the debt with the Cassa di Risparmio di Roma. Besides, the Prince was debtor to the BNRI for 1.700.000 lire, following his action beginning in 1892 to buy the Istituto Italiano di Credito Fondiario's banking bonds and the other financial operations.

<sup>24</sup> Originally, the Prince of Piombino had invested in the foundation of the Banca Inglese Italiana over 11 million lire through the transfer of securities and loans for 7.594 million lire and a cash payment amounting to 3,738,123,7 lire; However, in order to accomodate the subscription of the share capital of the Credit Société Financière, the French company received English securities for almost 4 million Italian lire.

when the crisis of the Italian banking system was at its peak and the project to disinvest family capital through the Banca Inglese Italiana – which actually remained operational for the whole of its brief existence – did not prove advantageous, that kind of system revealed all its weakness. Therefore, the Prince signed a first agreement with his creditors in the spring of 1893<sup>25</sup>. This agreement was mostly intended to buy time and rally the family's assets, transferring to their creditors the rights on part of the family income, while at the same time divesting some assets in order to create some liquidity and pay off part of the debts. These agreements were based on a balance sheet review carried out by Augusto Silvestrelli, the new family administrator who conducted a complete overhaul. In 1893 the overall capital assets amounted to 20.174.432 Italian lire, in the face of liabilities of 17.512.315 lire; a decrease, compared with November 1892, of 49% of the assets and by 77% of the liabilities, due, first and foremost, to a reality check based on a severe and realistic reassessment of the main assets and their use. In fact, 37,6% of the family holdings was made up of rural assets, whereas the urban ones (mostly in Rome) amounted to 33,3% of the total. The securities were mostly composed of stocks of the Banca Inglese (16,6%) and of the Istituto Italiano di Credito Fondiario (4,9%). The liabilities belonged to unprivileged creditors up to 41,7%, 40,3% to mortgage creditors, and 1,6% to the privileged ones.

In August 1896, after the failure of a new relaunch project for the Banca Inglese Italiana and the onset of its closure, Rodolfo and Ugo Boncompagni paid some of the arrears by tran-

---

<sup>25</sup> HABI, *Liquidazioni, Pratiche*, 317, f. 1, BNRI, *Ufficio Sconti e Anticipazioni. Depositi e Corrispondenti. Rodolfo Boncompagni Ludovisi*, Documento 65.; *Ibid.*, 317, f. 1, *Schiarimenti sullo Stato Attivo e Passivo del Patrimonio di S.E. il principe di Piombino al 4 febbraio 1893*; *Ibid.*, 318, f. 1, *Copia a stampa della Convenzione stipulata il 30 marzo 1893 tra il Principe di Piombino ed i suoi creditori*.

sferring, directly this time, a part of their assets to creditors (with the notable exception of the Administration of the Holy See and of the Banco di Santo Spirito). Therefore, the family divested several urban properties, worth 3.381.473 Italian lire, and two credits valued at 1.837.890 lire, for an overall total of 5.219.363 lire<sup>26</sup>.

Thus ended the history of the real estate investments which the Prince of Piombino carried out between 1885 and 1892. To try to understand how these choices affected the family estate, it is possible to compare the situation of the main income sources in 1885 (when the divisions in the heritable estate were settled) with that in 1892 (the year of maximum expansion of the financial and real estate assets) and that in September 1896 (i.e., after the aforementioned transfer of some assets). Analyzing the divestitures made to overcome the family's budgetary difficulties, one can clearly see the attempt Rodolfo made to keep some of those cornerstone assets which shaped the medium-term family strategies: the value of the assets transferred to unprivileged creditors in 1896, after the second agreement, amounted to about 4,8 million lire, 3,4 of which were linked to urban assets; however, the overall real estate divestitures directly carried out by the Prince between 1893 and 1896 (i.e. between the first and the second agreement) amounted to about 4,6 million lire. About 3,4 million of which could be traced to rural assets and "only" 1,2 million to urban assets<sup>27</sup>. Until he was able to decide the fate of his assets autonomously, Rodolfo

<sup>26</sup> Please see *Ibid.*, 47, f. 1, *Cessione in pagamento Principe di Piombino Banca d'Italia, Banca Romana, Credito Mobiliare, Cassa di Risparmio di Foligno, Banca Industriale e Commerciale, Pio Folchi, e cessione signora Chiassi Rocchi ai suddetti.*

<sup>27</sup> For further information on the divestitures, please see. HABI, *Liquidazioni, Pratiche*, 319, f. 1, *Situazione patrimoniale di S.E. il principe di Piombino nel biennio 1 aprile 1893-1 aprile 1895*; ASV, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 614, n. 187a, Gennaio 1936. *Quartiere Ludovisi. Breve relazione per S.E. il Principe di Piombino.*

tried to curtail the losses of the urban assets; it was in fact only after the second agreement in 1896 that the negotiations with the family's creditors brought to a more marked divestiture of these assets. Therefore, in September 1896 the worth of the urban assets remaining to Don Rodolfo amounted to 2.563.600 lire, markedly less than the 10.243.423 lire of 1892. It was a reduction of a fifth, if calculated at current prices. And yet, the collapse of 1896 appears all the more meaningful if one considers that the size of the family's urban assets went substantially back to the levels before the real estate speculation when, excluding the value of Villa Ludovisi, their value amounted to 2,6 million lire. The failure of this strategy could not be more obvious, especially considering that, compared to the situation in 1885, there were two key differences: the substantial concentration of family property in Rome and the absence of the potential provided in 1885 by Villa Ludovisi.

The condition of the rural assets was similar, as they went back in September 1896 to a slightly higher level than in 1885; if calculated at current prices, the worth of the extra-urban assets went up from 5,2 million lire in 1885 to 9,4 in 1892, to return to 5,9 in 1896. And this was despite the fact that the allotment profit was partially reallocated towards extra-urban assets and the fact that the transaction carried out in August 1896 included only urban and financial assets.

Considering the financial activities of the family, a significant decrease can be noticed, not only with respect to the values of 1892, but also in the composition of those real estate assets inherited or taken over by the Prince in June 1885. Excluding the transaction of August 1896 and the transfers carried out during the previous three years, in September 1896, Don Rodolfo could rely on about 742.000 lire of capital assets in securities (they amounted to 1,5 million lire in 1885).

Overall, the real estate belonging to the Prince went down to 8.511.534 lire (calculated at 1896 current prices) undergoing a negative variation of 37,6% (-38,3% at constant prices) when compared to 1885 and by 56,8% (-55,2% at constant prices) compared to 1892.

Therefore, during the decade considered, two different phases can be seen: the growth during the expansion years, in the 1885-1892 period and the collapse in the following three years. It is, however, evident how the lively growth experienced during the years before Silvestrelli's administration was somewhat compromised by the overvaluation of the stocks and the bonds the family held because of underestimating the cash the Boncompagnis would soon have needed; such needs were to continue also in the years following the 1896 transactions by virtue of the significant arrears with those creditors who remained outside the *cessio bonorum*<sup>28</sup> which gave rise to further important sales<sup>29</sup>.

---

<sup>28</sup> Besides the unprivileged creditors (and excluding the calculation of committed expenses) in the balance sheet for the financial year ending on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1895 had been inserted other property liabilities amounting to 9.661.970 Italian lire, due to the "Privileged creditors" (275.852,9 lire), to the "Family dowries" (2.019.092,2 lire), to the "Mortgage creditors" (5.714.986,4 lire) and to the "Other creditors not involved in the agreement of March 1893" (1.652.038,3 lire). According to early calculations – nevertheless requiring further in-depth analysis – even not considering those entries closed by those agreements connected with the transaction of August 28 1896, in September of the same year, a series of liabilities were still standing. They amounted to somewhat less than 8 million lire (on this, please see HABI, *Liquidazioni, Pratiche*, 321, f. 1, *Amministrazione del Patrimonio del principe di Piombino dal 1 aprile 1893 al 1 aprile 1895. Relazione*).

<sup>29</sup> Between the 1800s and the first decade of the 1900s. Don Rodolfo carried out the following divestments: a cottage in Porta Salaria (1900); a small house in via dell'Orso (1900); a house in via Urbana (1902); a warehouse in Sant' Angelo in Pescheria (1908); a house in via Ripetta (1908); some olive groves in Trevi

Upon the death of Don Rodolfo, in 1911, his title and estate went to Francesco Boncompagni Ludovisi, his nephew. After having acquired the estate of his uncle Ignazio as well, the new Prince came to be the most important heir of the two brothers who were the major protagonists of the division of June 1885. Therefore, a partial mending of the family estate was achieved, albeit at a significantly lower level than in the past.

#### 4. The reasons for lack of success

The accession of Rome and of the former Papal States into the Kingdom of Italy followed a complex path. This process corresponded to a substantial transformation of the Italian banking and financial structure: as Mr. La Francesca reminded, it was a “segmented” system, featuring the coexistence of more traditional systems and the growth of cooperative banks, of postal savings institutions, of new commercial banking institutions and of the first banks dealing in securities<sup>30</sup>. This kind of development reflected the real economy, which featured a patchwork of important, capital-intensive projects in industrialization and an economic structure requiring credit institutions able to support commerce, agriculture and small enterprises. Financial capital was not always allocated to sectors being properly industrial and was often allocated through credit institutions and banks dealing in securities for stock operations,

---

(1911); other properties in San Quirico (1911). In 1901 the Ludovisi Museum was transferred to the Italian State for a million lire, a sum by means of which the family paid a part of its remaining debt with the Vatican (please see VSA, Archiv. Boncompagni-Ludovisi, prot. 614, n. 187a, *Gennaio 1936. Quartiere Ludovisi. Breve relazione per S.E. il Principe di Piombino*).

<sup>30</sup> S. La Francesca, “Credito e finanza tra continuità e trasformazioni istituzionali (1861-1993)”, in *Banche e reti di banche nell'Italia postunitaria*, edited by G. Conti, S. La Francesca, Bologna, 2000, pp. 11-140.

during the loans in favour of public entities, as well as in those investments concerning infrastructure and construction. According to Mr. Conti, in many ways, the real estate speculative boom of the 1880s was the peak of such a process<sup>31</sup>, enhanced by several forms of public intervention. The latter strengthened the links between the banks and the construction industry and, in some cases – as noted by Mr. Di Taranto on the Magliani decrees<sup>32</sup> – had also a countercyclical role.

In such a context, a significant part of the aristocracy in Rome was forced to rethink their own forms of intervention in an urban economy where extensive and varied interests merged, as illustrated by the currently huge literature on the events concerning construction during those years. A medium-term analysis of the management of both the estates and the money of the Boncompagni family highlighted some elements that, even if they cannot, of course, be generalized, can be useful in comparative analysis. The reallocation of the assets within the properties belonging to Rodolfo Boncompagni – a feature present both during the expansion years and at the beginning of the crisis management period – was a feature of a process which began, at least in part, at the time of Don Antonio III as a response to the growing cash outflow and taxation pressuring the family income. To these changes joined also, after the capture of Rome by the Italian state and the death of Antonio III, the fall of two important external factors: the abolition of

---

<sup>31</sup> G. Conti, "Finanza d'impresa e capitale di rischio in Italia (1870-1939)", in *Rivista di Storia Economica*, X n.s., 1993, 3, pp. 307-332 (pp. 309-310).

<sup>32</sup> G. Di Taranto, "Economia sociale e finanza pubblica in un inedito di Agostino Magliani del 1849", in *Politica economica, amministrazione e finanza nell'opera di Agostino Magliani*, Minutes of the Study Meeting in Salerno-Laurino 11-13 October 1995, edited by A. Guenzi, D. Ivone, Naples, 1997, pp. 809-831.

the *fideicommissum* and the new possibilities offered by Rome as the new Capital of the Italian state. The abolition of the *fideicommissum* brought on, in 1885, a first division of the family estate between the two sons and a complex division of the heritable estate, which revolved also around the fate of Villa Ludovisi. The abolition of the *fideicommissum* and the primogeniture after Italian Unification had a crucial effect on the estate of noble families, in particular the Boncompagnis. The second factor allowed a part of this capital (including the family villa itself) to be reallocated towards other investments. In the Rome of 1885 one of the most sought-after opportunities to gain an immediate return on investment arose from the zoning of building sites.

However, the crisis in the building sector and its effects on the end of the allotment of the Ludovisi estate should not be confused with the consequences of the choices the Boncompagni made with the profits of that speculation. Between 1885 and 1896, Rodolfo Boncompagni carried out a reallocation of their financial and real estate assets, within which the coexistence between modern elements (the new destinations and instruments for investment) seamlessly integrated with those more markedly characterizing the nobility in Rome (such as land purchases, the expenditures for the new family residence in via Veneto, and the quest for new forms of income).

Such coexistence can be clearly seen at work if one considers that the Boncompagnis, despite having received significant liquidity from the allotment of Villa Ludovisi never attempted to invest in those sectors we would nowadays define as fully industrial. Surely, the choice of zoning their former residence and, most of all, the will to invest the resulting profit in the new, related financial institutions were, without doubts,

a significant change compared with the previous forms of estate management (where securities had a lesser role, compared with the other assets). This change is well represented, for example, by the change in balance sheets in November 1892 when, at the zenith of the activities started after 1885, they featured an “industrial part” (the aforementioned *Parte Industriale*), gathering the financial activities and the stocks of those real estate companies capitalized by the Boncompagnis in cooperation with Michele and Cesare Lazzaroni.

However, because of the nature of those investments and the way in which they were conducted, it seems safe to say that they were still linked to the search for a concept of income.

It was also a choice more in line with the traditional logic responsible for the growth of the family fortune for centuries. The shift from land to financial income might have appeared as the most natural outcome compared with the century-old forms of managing household interests. Even if this shift brought a partial, but by no means small, modernization of the techniques of estate management, no effective and structural innovations, because of family-based factors and of the current economic context.

Striving to keep a role and a presence for the household in the Rome of 1870 clashed with the inaccuracy and lack of data for new investment opportunities.

Because of the economic crisis and collapse of the Italian national banking system, to which the errors of the Prince and of his associates contributed, the family estate was burdened with significant debts and was largely scaled down, reaching, in 1896, a substantially lower level than in 1895. Furthermore, the assets had no possibilities of employment such as those offered by the Ludovisi allotment.

Therefore, besides incurring other irrecoverable debts forcing them to carry out other divestments in the following years, the Boncompagnis were cut out from the investment opportunities which existed in the Giolitti era.