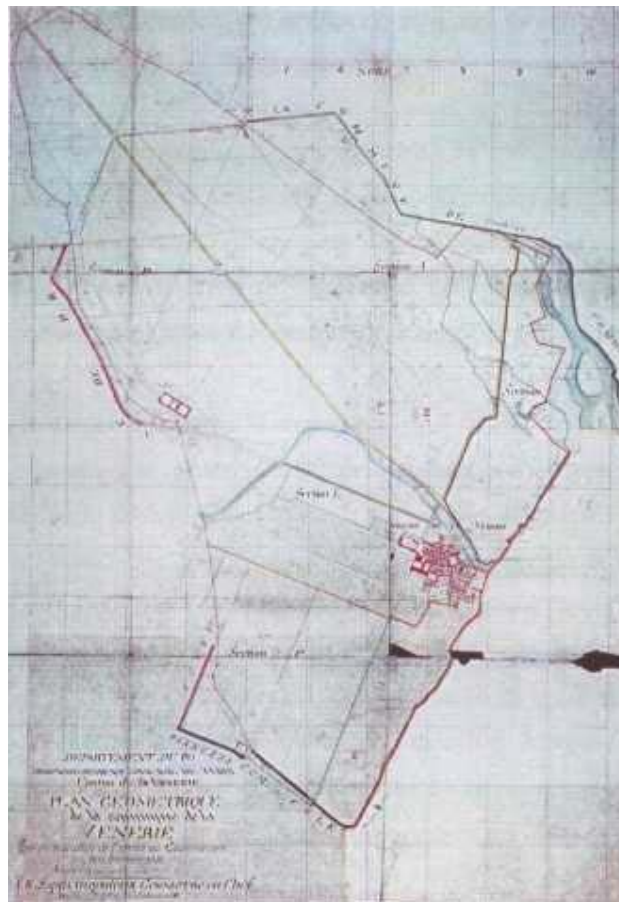


The Mandria and its territory in the 19th century. From hunting ground to throughbred stable and farm

by Federica Mignanego

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As the "Venaria Reale" is now the protagonist of a large restoration project, representing the largest building site in Europe, it is also essential to take into consideration the territory surrounding it. Such territory includes the Mandria, which lies at only one kilometre from the Royal Hunting Lodge and was the favourite area of the Savoias for centuries in the past.



The Mandria has an important role, because the territory provides a history of its transformations, and for the buildings within its grounds. Some have more "historical value" than others but all the constructions contributed to creating the history of this park.

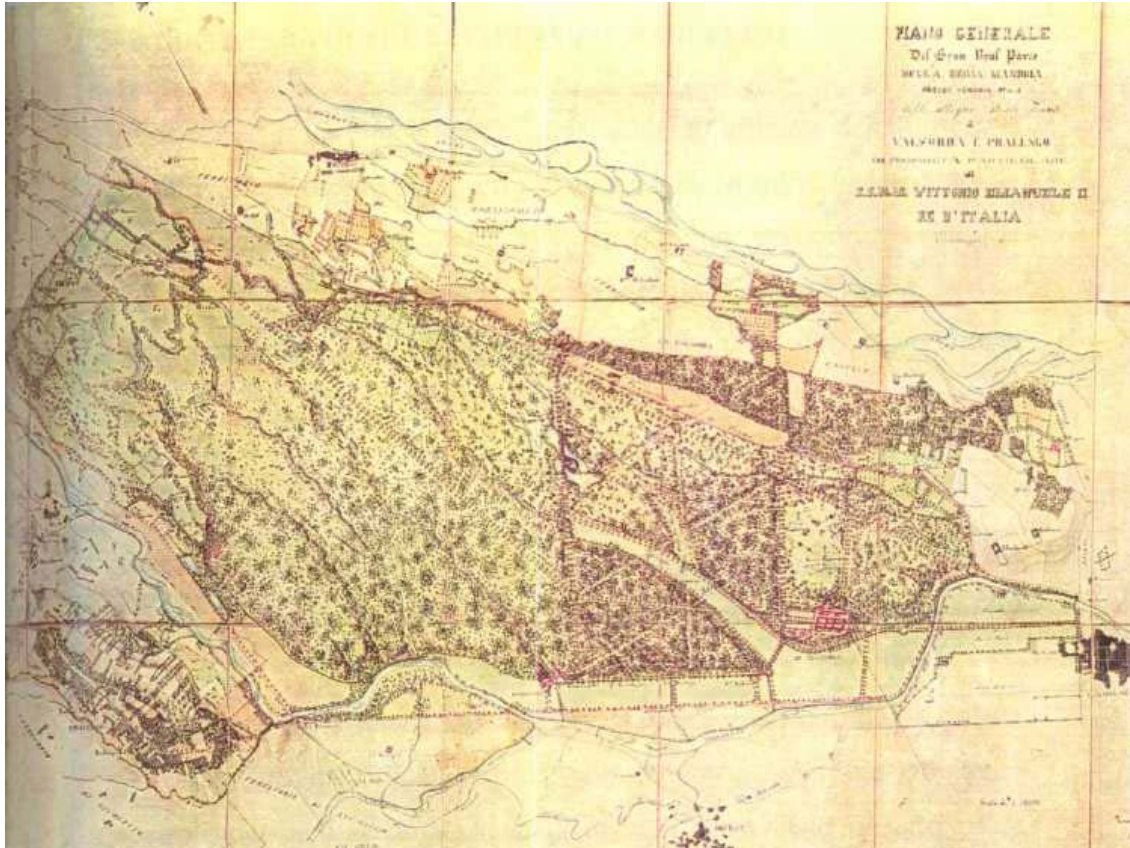
Amongst the most famous buildings, the "Castello della Mandria" (Mandria Castle), the "Bizzarria" and the "Castello dei Laghi" (Lake Castle) are definitely the most interesting monuments. Castello della Mandria includes the royal apartments and the premises where the Savoia stud-farm was located. Bizzarria and Castello dei Laghi point to the eclectic architecture of the mid-1800s. They aimed to dignify this park and make wildfowling hunting more pleasant, as hunting was not only a leisure activity, but it also provided the opportunity to reciprocate favours and form alliances.



Profitable agricultural activity was connected with the relevant animal farming and was carried on at the farmhouses - this was a very lucrative business which continued with time and yielded a lot of profits.

This analysis concentrated on the Mandria (Venaria) of the 19th century, that is the time when the estate underwent significant changes especially as regards the organisation of its stud-farm. In fact, it was developed in the French period and subsequently during the Restoration, when the king Vittorio Emanuele II was in power. This king was also known as the re "cacciatore" (hunting king) and this is one of the reasons why he wanted to embellish the park, adorning its lanes with trees, in order to spend long idling periods.

During the reign of Vittorio Emanuele II major changes were made within the hunting ground: the castle was turned into a Royal residence and the hunting "repositoires" (Bizzarria and Castello dei Laghi) were built. New farmhouses were constructed whereas the old farmsteadings were enlarged and renovated, so that it could house more horses. Hunting pathways and tree-lined avenues were realised to welcome guests and hunters.



Unfortunately, little information regarding this "re-styling" was available – it was especially difficult to collect papers providing notions about the new routes and artificial lakes. On the contrary, I was able to examine records justifying the expenses concerning the irrigation canals and the "bealere".

The study was based on the essential bibliography of the Mandria and on the relevant comparison of heterogeneous documents (French Government, Royal Archives, "The Mandria Trust" etc.).

The papers recently deposited with the State Archives by the Mandria Trust were a precious source, as they helped me elaborate a genealogy of the various purchases of the estate from the 19th century on.

The spatial pattern was studied with the help of specific records from the archives (such as land registries) which allowed me to reconstruct the agricultural and infrastructural fabric by means of a cartographic re-elaboration, focusing on various historical periods (before 1800, that is 1798-1814; 1814-1848; reign of Vittorio Emanuele II (1848); from 1878 forth).

Detailed photographic surveying concerning its rural buildings, such as the farmhouses and stables and the pavilions or "repositoires," was also carried out.

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