

## CHAPTER I

## How Many Kinds of Principality There Are, and by What Means They Are Acquired<sup>a</sup>

All the states, all the dominions that have held and now hold sway over men, have been either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary (their rulers having been for a long time from the same family) or they are new. The new ones are either completely new (as was Milan to Francesco Sforza)<sup>b</sup> or they are like limbs joined to the hereditary state of the ruler who annexes them (as is the kingdom of Naples to the king of Spain).<sup>c</sup> States thus acquired are either used to living under a prince or used to being free;<sup>d</sup> and they are acquired either with the arms of others or with one's own, either through luck or favour or else through ability.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This chapter summarises the topics discussed later, esp. in Chs. II–XI.

<sup>b</sup> Sforza became duke of Milan in 1450, putting an end to the short-lived Ambrosian republic, which arose after Filippo Maria Visconti's death in 1447.

<sup>c</sup> Ferdinand the Catholic. <sup>d</sup> I.e., are republics.

<sup>e</sup> This is the first instance of the antithesis between *fortuna* and *virtù*, which is so conspicuous in M.'s works. See esp. Chs. VI–IX.

*The Prince*

---

CHAPTER II

Hereditary Principalities

I shall not discuss republics, because I have previously treated them at length.<sup>a</sup> I shall consider only principalities, and shall weave together the warps mentioned above, examining how principalities can be governed and maintained.

I say, then, that states which are hereditary, and accustomed to the rule of those belonging to the present ruler's family, are very much less difficult to hold than new states, because it is sufficient not to change the established order, and to deal with any untoward events that may occur; so that, if such a ruler is no more than ordinarily diligent and competent, his government will always be secure, unless some unusually strong force should remove him. And even if that happens, whenever the conqueror encounters difficulties, the former ruler can re-establish himself.

To cite an Italian example: the duke of Ferrara<sup>b</sup> resisted the assaults of the Venetians in 1484, as well as those of Pope Julius in 1510, just because his family was very well established in that state. For a natural ruler has fewer reasons and less need to harm others. Consequently, men will be better disposed towards him; and if he is not hated for unusually vicious conduct,<sup>c</sup> it is not surprising that he should be regarded with affection by his subjects. Moreover, the length and continuity of his family's rule extinguishes the memories of the causes of innovations:<sup>d</sup> for any change always leaves a tooting-stone for further building.

CHAPTER III

Mixed Principalities

However, it is in new principalities that there are real difficulties. First, if the principality is not completely new but is like a limb that is joined to

<sup>a</sup> This is probably an allusion to the *Discourses*, or perhaps to Bk I of that work. But it may well be a later interpolation.

<sup>b</sup> Here M. conflates two dukes of Ferrara, Ercole I and Alfonso I d'Este. See pp. 123–4.

<sup>c</sup> E.g., taking property or womenfolk belonging to others: see pp. 58, 62.

<sup>d</sup> This sentence is not entirely clear; for Montanari, *le memorie e le cagioni* is an instance of hendiadys, and means 'the memory of the causes'.

### *III: Mixed Principalities*

---

another principality (which taken together may almost be called a mixed principality), its mutability arises first from a very natural problem, which is to be found in all new principalities. This is that men are very ready to change their ruler when they believe that they can better their condition, and this belief leads them to take up arms against him. But they are mistaken, because they later realise through hard experience that they have made their condition worse. This arises from another natural and normal constraint, which is that anyone who becomes a new ruler is always forced to injure his new subjects, both through his troops and countless other injuries that are involved in conquering a state. The outcome is that you make enemies of all those whom you have injured in annexing a principality, yet you cannot retain the friendship of those who have helped you to become ruler, because you cannot satisfy them in the ways that they expect. Nor can you use strong medicine against them, since you have obligations to them. For even if one possesses very strong armies, the goodwill of the inhabitants is always necessary in the early stages of annexing a country.

These were the reasons why Louis XII of France quickly annexed Milan,<sup>a</sup> and just as quickly lost it;<sup>b</sup> and Ludovico's own troops were sufficiently powerful to deprive him of it the first time. For when the people who had opened the gates to Louis found that they did not receive the benefits they had expected, they could not endure the oppressive rule of the new master.<sup>c</sup>

It is certainly true that, after a country that has rebelled has been reconquered a second time, it is less likely to be lost, since the ruler, because of the rebellion, will be more ruthless in consolidating his power, in punishing the guilty, unmasking suspects, and remedying weaknesses in his government. Thus, a<sup>d</sup> Duke Ludovico creating a disturbance on the borders was enough to cause the king of France to lose Milan the first time. But to lose it a second time, it was necessary to have all the powers acting against him,<sup>e</sup> and for his armies to be defeated or driven out of Italy. This happened for the reasons mentioned above.

Nevertheless, he did lose Milan twice. The general reasons for the first loss have been discussed; it remains now to discuss the reasons for

<sup>a</sup> September 1499.

<sup>b</sup> Ludovico Sforza returned to Milan on 5 February 1500, but he lost it in April 1500.

<sup>c</sup> See p. 81. <sup>d</sup> *uno*: the indefinite article expresses M.'s contempt for Ludovico Sforza.

<sup>e</sup> In April 1512, after the battle of Ravenna, in which the French were opposed by the army of the Holy League; Louis had retaken Milan in April 1500, after the battle of Novara.

---

*The Prince*

---

the second, and to consider what solutions were available to him, and what someone in his position might do, in order to maintain better than the king of France did the territory annexed.

I say, then, that the territories a conqueror annexes and joins to his own well-established state are either in the same country,<sup>a</sup> with the same language, or they are not. If they are, it is extremely easy to hold them, especially if they are not used to living freely.<sup>b</sup> To hold them securely, it is enough to wipe out the family of the ruler who held sway over them, because as far as other things are concerned, the inhabitants will continue to live quietly, provided their old way of life is maintained and there is no difference in customs. This has happened with Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony and Normandy, which have been joined to France for a long time.<sup>c</sup> Although there are some linguistic differences, nevertheless their way of life is similar, so no difficulties have arisen. Anyone who annexes such countries, and is determined to hold them, must follow two policies: the first is to wipe out their old ruling families; the second is not to change their laws or impose new taxes. Then the old principality and the new territory will very soon become a single body politic.

But considerable problems arise if territories are annexed in a country that differs in language, customs and institutions, and great good luck and great ability are needed to hold them. One of the best and most effective solutions is for the conqueror to go and live there.<sup>d</sup> This makes the possession more secure and more permanent. This is what the Turks did in Greece:<sup>e</sup> all the other measures taken by them to hold that country would not have sufficed, if they had not instituted direct rule. For if one does do that, troubles can be detected when they are just beginning and effective measures can be taken quickly. But if one does not, the troubles are encountered when they have grown, and nothing can be done about them. Moreover, under direct rule, the country will not be exploited by your officials; the subjects will be content if they have direct access to the ruler. Consequently, they will have more reason to be devoted to him if they intend to behave well, and to fear him if they do not. Any foreigners

<sup>a</sup> *provincia*: it denotes any area that is larger than a 'city' or 'city-state' (*città*). See pp. 101–2.

<sup>b</sup> *vivere liberi*. See pp. 108–9.

<sup>c</sup> Normandy in 1204, Gascony in 1453, Burgundy in 1477, Brittany in 1491.

<sup>d</sup> I.e., to institute direct rule.

<sup>e</sup> 'Greece': M. meant the whole Balkan peninsula, which was subjected to Turkish invasions during the fifteenth century. The statement that the Turks lived in that state (or ruled it directly) refers to the fact that, after 1453, Constantinople became the capital of the new state.

*III: Mixed Principalities*

with designs on that state will proceed very carefully. Hence, if the state is ruled directly, it is very unlikely indeed to be lost.

The other very good solution is to establish colonies in a few places, which become, as it were, fetters for the conquered territory. If this is not done, it will be necessary to hold it by means of large military forces. Colonies involve little expense; and so at little or no cost, one establishes and maintains them. The only people injured are those who lose their fields and homes, which are given to the new settlers; but only a few inhabitants are affected in this way. Moreover, those whom he injures can never harm him, because they are poor and scattered. All the other inhabitants remain unharmed, and should therefore be reassured, and will be afraid of causing trouble, for fear that they will be dispossessed, like the others. I conclude that these colonies are not expensive, are more loyal and harm fewer people; and those that are harmed cannot injure you because, as I said, they are scattered and poor.

It should be observed here that men should either be caressed or crushed; because they can avenge slight injuries, but not those that are very severe. Hence, any injury done to a man must be such that there is no need to fear his revenge.<sup>a</sup>

However, if military forces are sent instead of colonists, this is much more expensive, because all the revenue of the region will be consumed for its security. The outcome is that the territory gained results in loss to him; and it is much more injurious, because it harms the whole of that region when his troops move round the country. Everyone suffers this nuisance, and becomes hostile to the ruler. And they are dangerous enemies because, although defeated, they remain in their own homes. From every point of view, then, this military solution is misguided, whereas establishing colonies is extremely effective.

Again, as I have said, anyone who rules a foreign country should take the initiative in becoming a protector of the neighbouring minor powers and contrive to weaken those who are powerful within the country itself. He should also take precautions against the possibility that some foreign ruler as powerful as himself may seek to invade the country when circumstances are favourable. Such invaders are always helped by malcontents within the country, who are moved either by their own overweening ambition or by fear,<sup>b</sup> as happened in Greece, where the Aetolians were responsible for the invasion by the Romans. And in

<sup>a</sup> Cf. *Disc.* II, 23.    <sup>b</sup> Fear of the ruler.

*The Prince*

every country that the Romans attacked, some of the inhabitants aided their invasion. What usually happens is that, as soon as a strong invader attacks a country, all the less powerful men<sup>a</sup> rally to him, because they are enviously hostile to the ruler who has held sway over them. The invader has no trouble in winning over these less powerful men, since they will all be disposed to support the new power he has acquired. He needs only to be careful that they do not acquire too much military power and influence. And using his own forces, and with their consent, he can easily put down those who are powerful, thus gaining complete control of that country. A ruler who does not act in this way will soon lose what he has gained and, even while he does hold it, he will be beset by countless difficulties and troubles.

The Romans followed these policies very well in the countries they conquered. They established colonies, they had friendly relations with the less powerful (though without increasing their influence), they put down the powerful, and they ensured that strong foreign powers did not acquire influence in them.

I shall cite only Greece as an example. The Romans established friendly relations with the Achaeans and the Aetolians;<sup>b</sup> the Macedonian kingdom was put down;<sup>c</sup> Antiochus was driven out;<sup>d</sup> they never permitted the Achaeans and the Aetolians to augment their power, despite the good offices rendered by them; Philip<sup>e</sup> sought to be accepted as their ally, but they would not permit any revival of his power; and even the might of Antiochus could not constrain them to let him hold any dominions in that country.

The Romans acted in these circumstances as all wise rulers should: for they have to deal not only with existing troubles, but with troubles that are likely to develop, and have to use every means to overcome them. For if the first signs of trouble are perceived, it is easy to find a solution; but if one lets trouble develop, the medicine will be too late, because the malady will have become incurable. And what physicians say about consumptive diseases is also true of this matter, namely, that at the beginning of the illness, it is easy to treat but difficult to diagnose but, if it has not been diagnosed and treated at an early stage, as time passes it becomes easy to

<sup>a</sup> Those who have *some* influence or power, not the masses.

<sup>b</sup> They were the 'less powerful' ones (*minor potenti*) in Greece.

<sup>c</sup> Philip V of Macedon was decisively defeated by Flaminius at Cynoscephalae in 197 BCE.

<sup>d</sup> Antiochus III, king of Syria, defeated by the Romans at Thermopylae in 191 BCE, and again at Magnesia in 190.

<sup>e</sup> Philip V of Macedon.

*III: Mixed Principalities*

diagnose but difficult to treat. This also happens in affairs of state; for if one recognises political problems early (which only a prudent man can do),<sup>a</sup> they may be resolved quickly, but if they are not recognised, and left to develop so that everyone recognises them, there is no longer any remedy.

The Romans, therefore, because they perceived troubles when they were merely brewing, were always able to overcome them. They never allowed them to develop in order to avoid fighting a war, for they knew that wars cannot really be avoided but are merely postponed to the advantage of others. This was why they wanted to wage war against Philip and Antiochus in Greece, so that they could avoid having to fight them in Italy; it was possible for them to have avoided fighting both of them in Greece, but they were resolved not to. Moreover, the Romans never accepted a maxim heard every day on the lips of our own sages, to seek to benefit from temporising. They preferred to enjoy the benefits that derived from their own strength and prudence; because time brings all things with it, and can produce benefits as well as evils, evils as well as benefits.

However, let us return to the king of France, and examine whether he followed any of the policies I have advocated. I shall discuss Louis, not Charles;<sup>b</sup> since he held possessions in Italy for a longer period,<sup>c</sup> his conduct can be better studied. You will see that he did the opposite of what should be done in order to hold territory that is acquired in a foreign country.

King Louis' invasion of Italy was aided by the ambitious schemes of the Venetians, who wanted to gain half of Lombardy through that invasion.<sup>d</sup> I do not wish to criticise the policy adopted by the king: since he wanted to gain a foothold in Italy, and did not have any allies in this country (rather, he found every gate closed to him, because of the conduct of Charles),<sup>e</sup> he was forced to make whatever alliances he could.

<sup>a</sup> In *Ist. fior.* VII, 5, M. remarks that Cosimo de' Medici ruled a difficult state 'for thirty-one years: because he was very prudent he recognised troubles when they were only brewing, and therefore had time to prevent them growing or to protect himself so that they would not harm him when they had grown'.

<sup>b</sup> Louis XII and Charles VIII.

<sup>c</sup> Louis maintained power in Italy from 1499 to 1512, whereas Charles was in Italy only between August 1494 and July 1495.

<sup>d</sup> By the Treaty of Blois (April 1499), Louis promised the Ghiara d'Adda and Cremona to the Venetians.

<sup>e</sup> Venice, Milan, Florence, Naples, Mantua, Spain and the empire were all allied against Charles at the battle of Fomovo (6 July 1495).

---

*The Prince*

---

And this good policy of his would have been successful, if he had not committed other errors. When he had conquered Lombardy, then, the king at once regained the power and prestige that had been lost by Charles. Genoa surrendered,<sup>a</sup> the Florentines became his allies; the Marquis of Mantua, the duke of Ferrara, Bentivoglio, the countess of Forlì, the rulers of Faenza, Pesaro, Rimini, Camerino, Piombino,<sup>b</sup> and the people of Lucca, Pisa and Siena: all of them moved to ally themselves with him. At this point, the Venetians were able to understand the rashness of their policy: in order to gain a couple of possessions in Lombardy, they had enabled the king to become master of a third<sup>c</sup> of Italy.

Everyone will realise how easily the king could have maintained his standing in Italy if he had followed the above-mentioned rules, and had maintained and protected all those allies of his who, because there were many of them, and they were weak and fearful (some of the power of the Church, some of the Venetians), were forced to remain allied to him. And with their help he could easily have dealt effectively with the remaining greater powers.

But no sooner was Louis in Milan than he began to follow the opposite policy, by helping Pope Alexander<sup>d</sup> to conquer the Romagna. Furthermore, he did not realise that this decision weakened him (because it alienated his allies and those who had thrown themselves in his lap)<sup>e</sup> and aggrandised the Church, for it added much temporal power to the spiritual power, from which it derives so much authority. After he had made his first blunder, he was forced to follow it up, so that, to put a stop to Alexander's ambitions, and to ensure that he did not become master of Tuscany,<sup>f</sup> Louis was himself compelled to invade Italy.<sup>g</sup> It was not enough for him to have increased the power of the Church, and alienated his allies; because he coveted the kingdom of Naples, he divided it with

<sup>a</sup> In 1499; the French were driven out for the first time in 1507.

<sup>b</sup> Respectively, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Ercole I d'Este, Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, Caterina Sforza Riario, Astorre Manfredi, Giovanni Sforza, Pandolfo Malatesta, Giulio Cesare da Varano, Iacopo IV Appiani.

<sup>c</sup> Some texts have 'two-thirds', but this is not plausible.

<sup>d</sup> In fact this was undertaken by Cesare Borgia (encouraged by Alexander). See p. 120.

<sup>e</sup> I.e., who had rallied to him.

<sup>f</sup> In May 1502, Cesare Borgia moved to attack Florence, but was impeded by troops sent by Louis XII to help the Florentines.

<sup>g</sup> In July 1501; but to attack the Spaniards in the kingdom of Naples (see p. 26), not to check Cesare Borgia's growing power.



### *III: Mixed Principalities*

---

the king of Spain.<sup>a</sup> And whereas previously Louis had been arbiter of Italy, he now brought in a partner, so giving the ambitious men of that country and those who were discontented with him someone to turn to for help. Whereas he could have left in that kingdom a tributary king, Louis removed him<sup>b</sup> and established there someone who could drive him out.

Wanting to annex territory is indeed very natural and normal, and when capable men undertake it, they are always praised or, at least, not criticised. But if men who are not capable of achieving it are bent on undertaking it at all costs, this is a blunder that deserves censure.

Hence, if the king of France could have attacked the kingdom of Naples with his own troops, he should have done it; if he could not, he should not have tried to share it. And if sharing Lombardy with the Venetians deserves to be excused, because it enabled him to gain a foothold in Italy, this other sharing deserves to be censured, since it was not necessary and, therefore, not excusable.

Louis, then, made these five blunders: he extinguished the minor powers;<sup>c</sup> he increased the power of a ruler who was already powerful in Italy;<sup>d</sup> he brought into Italy a very strong foreign power;<sup>e</sup> he did not institute direct rule, and he did not set up colonies. Nevertheless, these mistakes need not have damaged him during his lifetime if he had not committed a sixth: that of putting down the Venetians.<sup>f</sup> For if he had neither aggrandised the Church nor brought the king of Spain into Italy, it would have been reasonable and necessary to put them down. But since he had followed these first two courses, he should never have permitted the ruin of the Venetians. Since the Venetians were powerful, they would always have prevented the other powers from intervening in Lombardy; they would never have permitted intervention if they were not to become masters of Lombardy

<sup>a</sup> By the Treaty of Granada (11 November 1500), Louis and Ferdinand the Catholic agreed to conquer the kingdom of Naples; Campania and Abruzzi were to go to France, Apulia and Calabria to Spain.

<sup>b</sup> I.e., the existing ruler, Frederick I of Aragon.

<sup>c</sup> The Marquis of Mantua and the others mentioned on p. 12.     <sup>d</sup> Alexander VI.

<sup>e</sup> Ferdinand the Catholic.

<sup>f</sup> France entered the League of Cambrai (December 1508) against Venice, which was decisively defeated at Vailà (or Agnadello) on 14 May 1509.

*The Prince*

themselves. And the other powers would not have wanted to take Lombardy from the king of France in order to give it to the Venetians, and they would not have had the strength to fight against both France and Venice. If anyone should urge that Louis ceded the Romagna to Alexander, and the kingdom of Naples to the king of Spain, in order to avoid waging war, I should reply with the arguments advanced before: that one should never permit troubles to develop in order to avoid having to fight a war; because it is never in fact avoided but only postponed to your detriment. And if others should cite the promise the king made to the pope (to undertake that campaign<sup>a</sup> for him in return for the annulling of his marriage and making Rouen<sup>b</sup> a cardinal), I would reply with arguments I shall advance later about how rulers should keep their promises.<sup>c</sup>

King Louis, then, lost Lombardy because he did not follow any of the policies followed by those who have annexed countries and been determined to keep them. And there is nothing extraordinary about this; it is a matter of course and to be expected.

I discussed this matter at Nantes<sup>d</sup> with the cardinal of Rouen, when the Duke Valentino (as Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander, was commonly called) was engaged in capturing the Romagna. When the cardinal of Rouen remarked to me that Italians did not understand warfare, I replied that the French did not understand statecraft, for if they did they would not have permitted the Church to acquire so much greatness. And experience has shown that the greatness of both the Church and the king of Spain, here in Italy, has been brought about by the king of France, and they have brought about his ruin.<sup>e</sup>

From this may be derived a generalisation, which is almost always valid: anyone who enables another to become powerful brings about his own ruin. For that power is increased by him either through guile or through force, and both of these are reasons for the man who has become powerful to be on his guard.

<sup>a</sup> In the Romagna.

<sup>b</sup> His marriage to Jeanne de Valois; Georges d'Amboise, archbishop of Rouen.

<sup>c</sup> See pp. 59–61. <sup>d</sup> In 1500. <sup>e</sup> I.e., the collapse of French power in Italy.