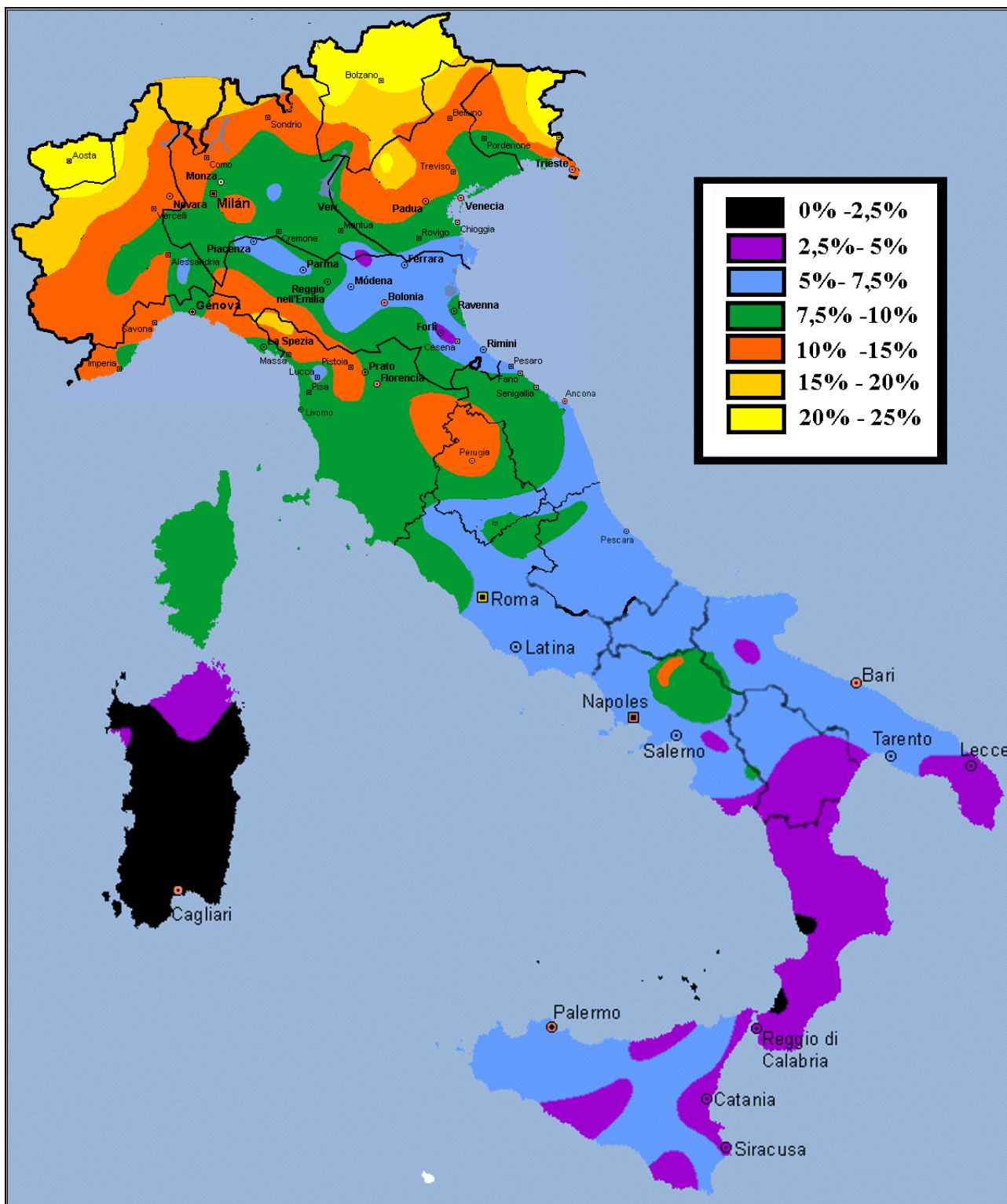


The genetic legacy of the Lusignan family & their followers

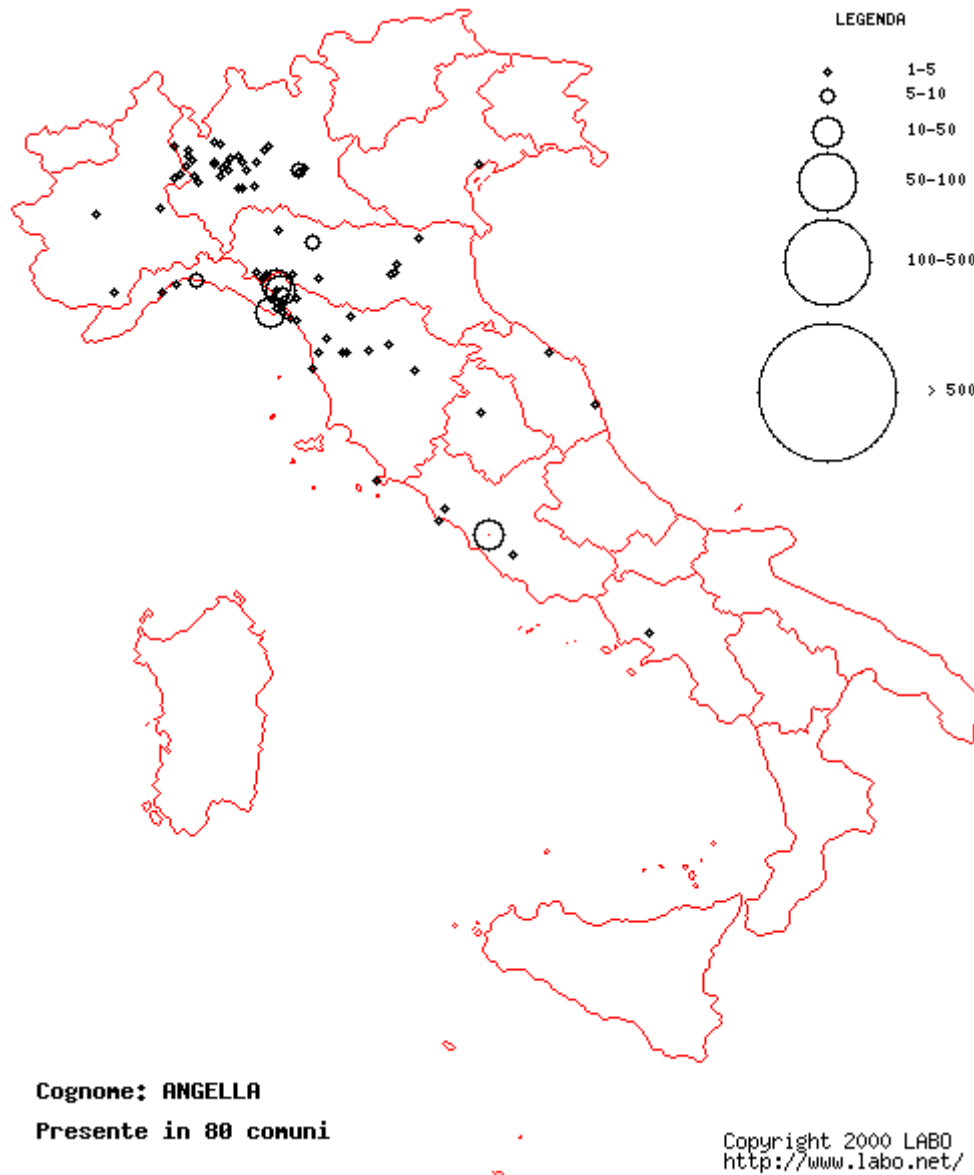
Although the political and social influence of the Lusignan family on the fortunes of the upper Magra valley barely survived into the 11th century, there would appear to be a lasting legacy in terms of the racial characteristics of the population. The Lusignans were Normans directly descended from Scandinavian peoples who had the defining characteristic of blond hair. Examination of the map below indicates that blond hair is still to be found to a disproportionately large extent in the upper Magra valley.



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blond_hair_italy.gif

Note that there is a high incidence of blond people in the Po valley – these reflect the many invasions of Saxons from modern day France and Austria which took place during the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. However, the Saxons were unable to establish permanent settlements South of the Apennines. Hence the upper Magra valley stands out as a unique genetic pool of Norman French ancestry.

As a reflection of the numbers of blond people in the area, the surname “Angella” is very common within the communes of Filattiera and Pontremoli (but, perhaps surprisingly, not within the adjacent communes). In Filattiera the name is the third most common and in Pontremoli it is the fourth. The “Angella” incidence map for the whole of Italy is given below – significant correlation with the “Blond” map is immediately apparent.



As a final remark, the people of Lusignana claim that their local dialect is shared with Rocca Sigillina but not with Biglio/Gigliana or Macerie. There would therefore appear to be a strongly embedded microculture which due to geographical isolation, poor transportation, rural poverty and distinctive dialect has resulted in low levels of marriage beyond the boundaries of the Rocca/Lusignana valleys. Hence the extraordinarily high retention of blond genes within the genetic pool over the last 1,000yrs.