Paolo Militello

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY ON EARLY MODERN AGE SICILY BETWEEN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

ABSTRACT: *This article retraces the main research on the history of early modern age Sicily (16th-19th centuries) written between the 1950s and the first decade of the 21st century. The first part of this article is dedicated to the process of moving on from a previous historiographical tradition, a process that spans from Rosario Romeo's Risorgimento in Sicilia (1950) to the years between 1984-1987, when Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Maurice Aymard and Francesco Renda published three important works about the history of Sicily. In this phase the new historiography decisively raised the question of the groundlessness of a "siculo-centred" history focused on the concept of a Sicilian people-nation and, at the same time, tried to link more firmly the history of Sicily to the history of both the Mezzogiorno and Italy in general and, comparing itself with the great thèse of Fernand Braudel, to the Mediterranean Sea. The second part of the article is dedicated to studies and research works until 2014. These studies, characterised by an enthusiastic openness to new themes, showed an open island, a land of peoples and cities; a Sicily which was neither colony nor periphery and which, instead, had an interactive and dialectical relationship between the "centres" which, in turn, had ruled it (Madrid, Turin, Vienna, Naples…).*

KEYWORDS: *Historiography, Sicily, Early Modern History, Mezzogiorno of Italy.*

LA STORIOGRAFIA SULLA SICILIA D'ETÀ MODERNA TRA XX E XXI SECOLO

SOMMARIO: *L'articolo ricostruisce i principali percorsi di ricerca sulla storia della Sicilia d'età moderna (XVI-XIX secolo) sviluppati tra gli anni Cinquanta del Novecento e il primo decennio del nostro secolo. La prima parte del contributo è dedicata a quella fase di svolta che va dalla pubblicazione di Risorgimento in Sicilia di Rosario Romeo (1950) fino al 1984-1987, anni in cui Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Maurice Aymard e Francesco Renda pubblicavano tre importanti volumi sulla storia dell'isola. In questa fase la nuova storiografia pone in maniera forte la questione della infondatezza di una storia "siculocentrica" incentrata sul concetto di "popolo-nazione" siciliano e, allo stesso tempo, cerca di unire più saldamente, a livello sovra-regionale, la storia dell'isola con quella del Mezzogiorno, dell'Italia e, misurandosi con la grande thèse di Braudel, del Mediterraneo. La seconda parte del contributo è dedicata agli studi e alle ricerche condotte fino al 2014. Caratterizzati da una entusiastica apertura a nuove tematiche, questi studi hanno delineato sempre più l'immagine di un'isola aperta, terra di uomini e di città; una Sicilia che non è colonia né periferia, ma che, al contrario, è inserita in una condizione interattiva e dialettica all'interno delle strutture statuali delle quali, nel corso dei secoli, si è trovata a far parte (Madrid, Torino, Vienna, Napoli, ecc.).*

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Storiografia, Sicilia, Storia dell'età moderna, Mezzogiorno d'Italia.*

In 1950 Rosario Romeo published *Risorgimento in Sicilia*[1], a work which offered a new interpretation in the historiography of Sicily and which was destined to become a point of reference in the following

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[1] R. Romeo, *Risorgimento in Sicilia*, Laterza, Bari, 1950. For our analysis, monographs were preferred: thus, for possible in-depth research, essays which appeared in the main journals have to be added to the bibliography of this work. Among them there are: «Nuovi Quaderni del Meridione» (completed in 1987); «Nuove Prospettive Meridionali» (completed in 1994); «Archivio Storico Siciliano», «Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale», «Archivio

decades[2]. Thanks to this work, it was possible to begin a process of moving on from a historiographical tradition which had based the history of the island on the concept of the Sicilian *people-nation*. This people, conquered but never completely tamed, would be the main driving force of those events which justified the right of Sicily to independence: from the Vespers to the anti-Spanish revolts; from the resistance to the Neapolitan government to the Constitution of 1812; from the Risorgimento (the 1821, the 1848) to the revolution of 1860[3].

In those years, Sicily was still involved in the decades-long debate (emphasised by the so-called *historiography of limits*, which spread in the 1950s and the 1960s) on the relationship of the history of Southern Italy with both the *Southern Question* (the failed economic and civic growth of the South of Italy and its inferior rank compared with the North) and *Meridionalism* (the tradition of analysis and socio-economic studies on post-unification issues)[4]. A debate which, in those years, intertwined with the profound changes affecting the island: at the politico-administrative level, the attribution, in 1946, of the status of Italian Region with Special Statute (that is, provided with autonomy and a wider jurisdiction), which somehow restored the connection with the, more or less limited, autonomy that Sicily had enjoyed in the previous centuries; at the economic level, the ambitious development policy based on considerable state investments; at the demographic level, the huge wave of migration towards Europe, and, above all, towards the industrial districts of the North of Italy; at the socio-cultural level, the rapid urbanisation which caused the *death* of the rural world[5]. All of this, inevitably, affected the way the historians

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Storico Messinese», «Archivio Storico Siracusano», «Incontri Mediterranei» and the most recent «Mediterranea - ricerche storiche» (also online). I thank Maurice Aymard, Enrico Iachello, Salvatore Adorno for their indications and suggestions.

[2] Among the main bibliographic reviews, it is important to mention G. Giarrizzo's notes at the end of his works: *La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità d'Italia*, in V. D'Alessandro, G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia dal Vespro all'Unità d'Italia*, vol. XVI of *Storia d'Italia*, Utet, Torino, 1989, pp. 97-783; and *La Sicilia moderna dal Vespro al nostro tempo*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 2004, pp. 173-178; together with the publications S. Bottari (ed.), *Rosario Romeo e "Il Risorgimento in Sicilia". Bilancio storiografico e prospettive di ricerca*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2002, and F. Benigno, C. Torrisi (eds), *Rappresentazioni e immagini della Sicilia tra storia e storiografia*, S. Sciascia Editore, Caltanissetta-Roma, 2003. Cf. also the essay by G. Schininà, *La storiografia regionale: la Sicilia*, «Memoria e Ricerca», 22, 2006, pp. 97-105.

[3] G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia moderna dal Vespro al nostro tempo* cit., p. 173.

[4] See S. Lupo, *Storia del Mezzogiorno, questione meridionale, meridionalismo*, «Meridiana», 32, 1998, pp. 17-52; A. De Francesco, *La palla al piede. Una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2012.

[5] I refer here the considerations made by Maurice Aymard during the seminars on *La Sicilia e il Mediterraneo* held in Catania for the students of the Master's Course Erasmus Mundus TEMA (European Territories) which I coordinated in January 2015.

looked at Sicily's past. «Only an interest in present life can lead us to examine a past event», Benedetto Croce had written, and, after him, Federico Chabod would add: «Every historian worth this name asks themselves questions which arouse from their conscience, soul, spirit»: they had both been among Romeo's masters[6].

As very soon highlighted by Giuseppe Giarrizzo, this "singularity" of both Sicily and its *people-nation* represented a historical ideal type which deserved to be included in «the history of *sicilianism*» rather than «the history of historiography», since it had «translated, into themes and (pre)judgments, formulas taken from the political debate…, dignified or not by the most important Sicilian literature»[7]: an enormous influence, that of literature, which, from Verga to Capuana and De Roberto, from Pirandello to Tomasi di Lampedusa and Sciascia – only to mention the most representative writers – had created the myth of the singularity and immutability of the *sicilianity*.

An ideal type which would be followed by Denis Mack Smith's theory formulated in his *A History of Sicily* of 1968[8]: drawing from an interpretation of Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, published posthumously in 1958[9] – which, in fact, has little to do with the novel – Mack Smith observed, in the history of the island, a tendency towards paralysis profited by, above all, the aristocracy «which, in order to preserve stability and privileges, gave Sicily to "foreign" masters, and blocked every domestic growth with corruption and criminality…»[10]. A tendentious theory which – as also highlighted by Maurice Aymard – was based on a modest critical and documental level bibliography[11].

Rosario Romeo, therefore, decisively raised the question of the groundlessness of a history of the Sicily "nation", and, also through the civic commitment characterising his generation, he tried to link more firmly the history of Sicily to the history of both the *Mezzogiorno*

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[6] «Solo un interesse della vita presente ci può muovere a interrogare un fatto passato» (B. Croce, *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, Laterza, Bari, 1917, p. 4); «ogni storico degno di questo nome si pone interrogativi che nascono dalla sua coscienza, dal suo animo, dal suo spirito» (F. Chabod, *Storia dell'idea d'Europa*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1961, p. 16).

[7] «Tradotto in temi e (pre)giudizi formule riprese dalla polemica politica… nobilitate o meno dalla maggior letteratura siciliana» (G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia moderna dal Vespro al nostro tempo* cit., p. 173).

[8] D. Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily. 2. Medieval Sicily. 800-1713*; *3. Modern Sicily after 1713*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1968.

[9] G. Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1958 (English transl.: *The Leopard*, Collins and Harvill, London, 1960).

[10] «Che per salvaguardare stabilità e privilegi, consegnava la Sicilia a padroni "stranieri", e bloccava ogni interno sviluppo con la corruzione e la criminalità…» (G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità* cit., p. 787).

[11] See the review of Mack Smith's books written by M. Aymard, «Rivista Storica Italiana», 82, 1970, pp. 481-483.

and Italy in general. Hence the important editorial project (10 volumes published between 1977 and 1981) on a "new" *Storia della Sicilia*, also analysed at a supra-regional level, since «the time has come to question a point of view centred on the history of the "Padan Italy" as "exemplary" history which threats to marginalise intellectually the southern history, in so far as it does not take into account its own characteristics»[12].

The essential turning point introduced by Romeo continued with two volumes about the History of Sicily published in the mid-1980s, when the cultural climate had already changed: in a modified southern society, the intellectuals and the historians (Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Gaetano Cingari, Francesco Renda, Orazio Cancila and so on) faced the challenge of «rewriting the history of early modern *Mezzogiorno* as well as preparing the cultural foundation of the meridionalism of the 1980s»[13].

The first book – which included the actions, the demands, the ferments of the previous decades – was, in 1985, *La Sicilia* edited by Maurice Aymard and Giuseppe Giarrizzo for the collection edited by Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti of Einaudi's *Storia d'Italia, Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi*. The title of the collection, though, should not mislead. If the watershed nature of the Italian process of unification, which spread from Sicily in 1860, is undeniable, it is also true that it took place through the unification of "old pre-unification of *early modern states*", each with its own history and its own tradition of research. Here lies the originality of Romano and Vivanti's idea which, as will be seen, Aymard and Giarrizzo will use as their own[14]. The book was published with contributions by the same Aymard (economy and society), by Antonino Recupero (on the years 1848-1874), by Enrico Iachello and Alfio Signorelli (the urban bourgeoisies), by Francesco Renda (on the years 1874-1894 and, above all, on the movement of the *Fasci siciliani*), by Giuseppe Barone (urban hegemonies and local power), by Salvatore Lupo

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[12] «Essendo venuto il momento di mettere in discussione una visione incentrata sulla storia dell'Italia padana come storia "esemplare", che rischia di emarginare intellettualmente la storia meridionale, nella misura in cui non riesca a intenderla nei suoi caratteri propri.» (*Introduzione* to *Storia della Sicilia*, vols. 1-10, Società editrice Storia di Napoli e della Sicilia, Napoli, 1977-1981). On Romeo's meridionalism, see G. Pescosolido, *Il meridionalismo di Rosario Romeo*, in F. Bartolini, B. Bonomo, F. Socrate (eds), *Lo spazio della storia. Studi per Vittorio Vidotto*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2013.

[13] «Riscrivere la storia del Mezzogiorno moderno e apprestare la base culturale del meridionalismo degli anni '80» (G. Giarrizzo, *Prefazione* to E. Iachello, *Il vino e il mare. "Trafficanti" siciliani tra '700 e '800 nella Contea di Mascali*, Maimone, Catania, 1991, p. 11).

[14] M. Aymard, *La Sicilia e il Mediterraneo* cit.

(fascism), by Rosario Mangiameli (the years 1943-1950), by Vincenzo La Rosa (archaeology, antiquity and historiography), by Franco Lo Piparo (language, dialect), by Salvatore Leone (cultural structures), by Rosario Spampinato and Paolo Pezzino (Mafia), by Gino Longhitano (demography) and by Giuseppe Dato (urban planning). Thanks to Aymard and Giarrizzo, the new historiography of Sicily (Giarrizzo) would confront itself with the great *thèse* of Fernand Braudel (already Aymard's "master") who, after all, with *La Méditerranée*, had already brought the Sicilian history to the centre of the Euro-Mediterranean history: «It is customary, when discussing Sicily – Braudel had written in the paragraph on "The Heart of the Mediterranean" (and he would dedicate a whole paragraph to the island: "East and west of Sicily") – to keep looking to the North, towards Naples… It is even more important to emphasise its links with North Africa, that is the value of this maritime world which our imperfect knowledge or lack of attention has left without a name»[15].

Einaudi's *Sicilia* was followed by a second volume, Giarrizzo's book on the history of Sicily *La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità d'Italia* (1987) (a summary of this volume, with revisions and updates, was published in 2004 with the title *La Sicilia dal Vespro al nostro tempo*)[16].

In the same years, between 1984 and 1987, Francesco Renda published, in Palermo, *Storia della Sicilia dal 1860 al 1970*[17]. The comparison between the suggestions provided by Giarrizzo's and Aymard's volumes as well as Renda's work allows us to understand better the unique characteristics of the new historiographical orientation. If Renda, «who partly synthesised and partly anticipated original research results»[18], would adhere, by his own admission, to the concept of the perpetuity of the "Sicilian" characters, the two scholars would go beyond the idea of a "Siculo-centred history", by juxtaposing the characters of a "mythical" Sicily to the characters of an "authentic" Sicily. In this manner Giarrizzo, in the Introduction to Einaudi's volume, summarised the difference between the two points of view:

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[15] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, University of California Press, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London, 1995, I, p. 117 (1st edition: A. Colin, Paris, 1949).

[16] See *supra*.

[17] The work was updated and republished with the title *Storia della Sicilia dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Sellerio, Palermo, 2003.

[18] «Che in parte riassumeva e in parte anticipava risultati di ricerca originali» (G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia moderna dal Vespro al nostro tempo* cit., p. 174).

Mythical Sicily: the Sicily-nation, whose "people" endures every oppression and every conquest; the Sicily-island, proud and seized; "feudal" Sicily with its municipal feuds, its possessive jealousy, its rural culture.

Behind the myth, the authentic characters: multi-ethnicity, the condition of island as advantage, the predominant urban dimension, multi-centrism as a trait of its political and cultural history. From this mixture, [came] a strong, highly connoted, regional history, but not "different" at first in the context of the southern kingdom and, later, in the national history of the new Italy[19].

In this open Sicily, an island but not isolated, around which the sea is not a limit, «but rather a mobile horizon which moves... until it laps the other coasts of the European, African, Middle-Eastern continents»[20], in this "multifarious" island (from the Sicily of the wheat to the Sicily of the wine, the silk, the meat...) the new historiographical season would identify a strong, connotative element: the long-term importance of the urban dimension, its being a "land of cities". The interest in the rural world and the workers of the land was replaced by the interest in the urban dimension. The city and its relationship with the territory (modes of settlement, urban hierarchies, territorial stability), the urban and local *élites*, the practices and representations of the territory are only a few of the new themes which came to be added to the traditional studies.

This change would characterise, thus, the following studies and research, starting from the outlines, such as the two volumes, published by Laterza in 2005 (but already published in "instalments" in 1999), of the *Storia della Sicilia*, a joint authorship edited by Giarrizzo himself and by Francesco Benigno. Also in this volume, as in Einaudi's, a new generation of historians condense, in short outlines, «the historiographical work which has been collected over the last few decades...», by dealing with «a selection of topics, each assigned to a specialist», in order to «offer a different history of Sicily, less indefinable and closed, less provincial, able to provide a new, shared image: that of a Mediterranean crossroads open to influences and contaminations, to experimentations and additions, to

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[19] «La Sicilia mitica: la Sicilia nazione, il cui "popolo" sopravvive a tutti i soprusi e a tutte le conquiste; la Sicilia-isola, orgogliosa e sequestrata; la Sicilia "feudale" delle faide municipali, della gelosia possessiva, della cultura contadina. Dietro il mito, i caratteri veri: la polietnia, la condizione di isola come vantaggio, la dimensione urbana dominante, il policentrismo come carattere della sua storia politica e culturale. Da questo intreccio, una vicenda regionale forte, fortemente caratterizzata, non per ciò "diversa" nel quadro prima del regno meridionale, e poi nella storia nazionale della nuova Italia» (G. Giarrizzo, *Introduzione* to M. Aymard, G. Giarrizzo (eds), *La Sicilia* cit., p. XIX).

[20] «Bensì un orizzonte mobile che si sposta... fino a toccare l'altra costa del continente, europeo africano medio-orientale» (Ivi, p. XLIX).

confluences (to encounters, to clashes) of peoples, of different traditions and religions. Of course, more appropriate to a new cultural context, naturally revisionist, but also – hopefully – more authentic»[21].

An open Sicily, land of peoples and cities

The methodological approach so far outlined has modernised and problematised the studies, carried out over the last thirty years, which are characterised by an enthusiastic openness also to new themes.

Already in the 1980s, the works on urban demography (started by, among others, Maurice Aymard who promoted a new demographic history of the island) were expanded. Initially, Biagio Longhitano's studies collected, in one single volume (1988), by applying the new technological opportunities of computer science, all the *Riveli* and censuses from 1570 to 1861 (a period during which the number of Sicilian cities grew from 158 units to 358)[22]. A research current then followed, which would result, in 2002, in an important outline by Domenico Ligresti; here, as observed by the author, «all the threads converge on an interpretation of the Sicilian demographic history centred around the theme of the large and medium cities, their variable ability to control the territory and their permanent and predominant presence»[23].

The most recent studies on the family have proceeded beyond value judgments such as the idea that the island's family structures ("amoral familism", the "honour" cult, the lack of public spirit) could explain the failed growth of the *Mezzogiorno* and Sicily. On the

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[21] «Proporre una storia di Sicilia diversa, meno ineffabile e chiusa, meno provinciale. Che proponga una nuova immagine condivisa, quella di un crocevia mediterraneo aperto agli influssi e alle contaminazioni, alle sperimentazioni e agli innesti, agli incroci (agli incontri, agli scontri) di popoli, tradizioni e religioni diverse. Certamente più adatta a una diversa temperie culturale, naturalmente revisionista, ma anche – sperabilmente – più vera.» (G. Giarrizzo, F. Benigno (eds), *Storia della Sicilia*, 2 vols., Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2003, p. VI). Among the outlines, D. Ligresti, *Sicilia aperta (secoli XV-XVII). Mobilità di uomini e idee*, Quaderni Mediterranea Ricerche Storiche, Palermo, 2006, has to be mentioned. An interesting outline for schools is S. Bosco's *Storia della Sicilia*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 2004.

[22] B. Longhitano, *Studi di storia della popolazione siciliana, I: Riveli, numerazioni, censimenti (1569-1861)*, Cuecm, Catania, 1988.

[23] «Tutti i fili convergono verso una lettura della vicenda demografica siciliana ruotante attorno alla tematica della grande e media città, della sua variabile capacità di controllo del territorio e della sua permanente e predominante presenza» (D. Ligresti, *Dinamiche demografiche nella Sicilia moderna (1505-1806)*, FrancoAngeli Editore, Milano, 2002, p. 189).

contrary, already beginning from Maurice Aymard's work on the Dukes of Terranova, research studies, influenced also by anthropology, has focused on kinship and hereditary transmission (*fideicommissum*, dotal transmission, the female role etc.) and in particular (see other contexts[24]) on economic and family strategies (not only of *élites*[25]) to show how the "family" is one of the principal components of development not only demographically and urbanwise, but also economically and socially.

These studies have overturned a historiographical interpretation which arose in the 1800s (see Giuseppe Giarrizzo) in part due to development and in part due to the 1700s reformatory anti-feudal debate being revived[26] and which gave rise to representing Sicily as an island populated by landed "barons" and *gabellotti* (a sort of tenant farmers) on the one hand, and on the other by oppressed country folk and manual labourers at the limits of survival.

Nothing could have been further from a much more complex and articulate truth in which the feudatories and their *gabellotti* often tried to ride market trends by increasing productivity with new investment (colonisations for the recovery of virgin territories) and new improvements (crop diversification, new techniques etc.)

Alongside feudal and demographic studies, in the meantime, a tide of urban history spread (which entered the Italian historiography from the Anglo-Saxon area, but also by Jean-Claude Perrot's works on Caen and by Bernard Lepetit's epistemological reflections) which goes

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[24] The reference is, for example, to the studies of Gérard Delille on Manduria and the Kingdom of Naples and to Bartolomè Clavero on Castile (G. Delille, *Le projet Manduria. Notes pour une étude du pouvoir local aux XVIème et XVIIème siècles*, Congedo, Galatina, 1990; B. Clavero, *Mayorazgo. Propiedad feudal en Castilla. 1369-1836*, Siglo Veintiuno, Madrid, 1989).

[25] M. Aymard, *La Sicilia e il Mediterraneo* cit. Among the studies on the aristocratic families, the following have to be mentioned: M. Aymard, *Une famille de l'aristocratie sicilienne au XVIe et XVIIe siècles: les ducs de Terranova. Un bel exemple d'ascension seigneuriale*, «Revue Historique», 501, 1972, pp. 29-66; M.C. Calabrese, *I Paternò di Raddusa*, FrancoAngeli Editore, Milano, 2002; Eadem, *L'epopea dei Ruffo di Sicilia*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2014; S. Laudani, *Lo Stato del Principe. I Moncada e i loro territori*, Sciascia Editore, Caltanissetta-Roma, 2008; C. Salvo, *Dalla spada alla fede. Gli Spatafora (secc. XIII-XVI)*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2009; S. Raffaele, *Aut virum… aut murum. Matrimoni strategici, serafiche nozze e mistici divorzi nella Sicilia moderna*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2010. Regarding the relationships between Sicily and the Order of Malta: A. Giuffrida, *La Sicilia e l'Ordine di Malta. 1529-1550. La centralità della periferia mediterranea*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2006; F. D'Avenia, *Nobiltà allo specchio. Ordine di Malta e mobilità sociale nella Sicilia moderna*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2009. About Justice, see V. Sciuti Russi, *Astrea in Sicilia. Il ministero togato nella società siciliana dei secoli XVI e XVII*, Jovene, Napoli, 1983 and O. Cancila, *Così andavano le cose nel secolo sedicesimo*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1984.

[26] G. Giarrizzo, *Introduzione* to M. Aymard, G. Giarrizzo (eds), *La Sicilia* cit., pp. XXI-XXII.

beyond the traditional model of interpretation of the Sicilian settlement according to which the economy of the latifundum would determine the formation of large dormitory villages, authentic *agrotowns*. Published in 1963, Giarrizzo's groundbreaking work on Biancavilla[27] prompted a series of studies which underline a remarkable urban dimension of Sicily, as opposed to the views of the island only as countryside and latifundum. Among these studies, Enrico Iachello's contributions stand out: the analysis of the cities, of the towns, of the villages highlights a social complexity which generates *élites* able to organise their power also in an urban context[28].

Thus, the histories of the single cities are published, beginning from Giuseppe Giarrizzo's *Catania* (1986) and Orazio Cancila's *Palermo* (1988)[29], both in Laterza's collection *Storia delle città italiane*; besides, the studies on the cities[30] and the cultural institutions (above all, the Universities[31]),

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[27] G. Giarrizzo, *Un comune rurale della Sicilia etna. Biancavilla (1810-1860)*, Società di Storia Patria per la Sicilia Orientale, Catania, 1963. See also F. Benigno, *Una casa, una terra. Ricerche su Paceco, paese nuovo nella Sicilia del Sei e Settecento*, Cuecm, Catania, 1985.

[28] E. Iachello, *Immagini della città. Idee della città. Città nella Sicilia (XVIII-XIX secolo)*, Maimone, Catania, 1999.

[29] Orazio Cancila's recent study, *Nascita di una città. Castelbuono nel secolo XVI*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2013, should also be mentioned.

[30] Among others, the following works should be mentioned (in chronological order): R. Battaglia, *Mercanti e imprenditori in una città marittima. Il caso di Messina (1850-1900)*, Giuffré, Milano, 1992; G. Restifo, *Taormina. Da borgo a città turistica*, Sicania, Messina, 1996; S. Adorno, *La produzione di uno spazio urbano. Siracusa tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2004; R. Cancila, *Gli occhi del Principe. Castelvetrano: uno stato feudale nella Sicilia moderna*, Viella, Roma, 2007; F. Gallo, *Siracusa barocca. Politica e cultura nell'età spagnola (secc. XVI-XVII)*, Viella, Roma, 2008; S. Bottari, *Messina nella Sicilia spagnola*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli, 2010.

[31] Regarding the University of Palermo: O. Cancila, *Storia dell'Università di Palermo. Dalle origini al 1860*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2006. Regarding the University of Messina: A. Romano (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Messanensis Studiorum Universitatis*, Sicania, Messina, 1992, and the second volume (1998) of «Annali di Storia delle Università italiane». Regarding the University of Catania: G. Giarrizzo, *Siciliae Studium Generale. I suoi luoghi, la sua storia*, Maimone, Catania, 1990; A. Coco, A. Longhitano, S. Raffaele (eds), *La Facoltà di Medicina e l'Università di Catania (1434-1860)*, Giunti, Firenze, 2000; G. Baldacci, *L'Università degli Studi di Catania tra XVIII e XIX secolo*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2008; Idem, *La città e la circolazione del sapere. Cultura, editoria e istruzione nella Catania del XVIII e XIX secolo*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2012. Regarding the relationship between culture and politics, M. Grillo, *L'isola al bivio. Cultura e politica nella Sicilia borbonica*, Edizioni del Prisma, Catania, 2000. Regarding the history of science, of philosophy and of medicine, the following studies are, above all, recommended: G. Bentivegna, *Dal riformismo muratoriano alle filosofie del Risorgimento. Contributi alla storia intellettuale della Sicilia*, Guida, Napoli, 1999; C. Dollo. *Filosofia e medicina in Sicilia*, G. Bentivegna, S. Burgio, G. Magnano San Lio (eds), Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2005; C. Dollo. *La cultura filosofica e scientifica in Sicilia*, G. Bentivgna (ed.), Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2012; see, also, L. Caminiti, *Dalla pietà alla cura. Strutture sanitarie e società nella Messina dell'Ottocento*, Giuffré, Milano, 2002; E. Frasca, *Il bisturi e la toga. Università e potere urbano nella Sicilia borbonica. Il ruolo del medico*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2008; the volume of miscellaneous

on the minorities and the emarginated[32], and on the cities and their schools[33] are modernised and problematised.

On a larger scale, both regional and extra-regional, the volume on the settlement in Sicily in the early modern and contemporary ages[34] prompts a debate about the settlement modes within the wider Euro-Mediterranean context. Here the different contributions (above all, Henri Bresc's and Melania Nucifora's) underline the existence of certain still unresolved issues in the studies on the settlements in Sicily: the polycentrism, and, in particular, the rivalry between Palermo and Messina, as well as between these two and Catania; the urban hierarchies and the territorial equilibriums following the growth of the newly founded cities and the earthquake of 1693[35]; the modes of representation in the organization of the territorial and urban space; the criticism of a view of the island as a homogeneous space, and, conversely, the "discovery" of the local realities, of areas with medium and small-sized centres capable of competing or dealing independently with the major urban centres (the Ionio-Etnean area, and, above all, the county of Mascali; south-eastern Sicily, with the County of Modica…)[36].

works by D. Ligresti, G. Sanfilippo (eds), *Progresso scientifico nella Sicilia dei Borboni*, Maimone, Catania, 2013; and M. Alberghina, *Ospedalità antica in Sicilia. Un millennio di medicina e assistenza ospedaliera*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2014.

[32] A. Coco, *Le minoranze ebraiche in Sicilia*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 2006; G. Fiume, *La vecchia dell'aceto. Un processo per veneficio nella Palermo di fine Settecento*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1990.

[33] Of particular interest is the research current, started by Giarrizzo, on the histories of school institutions through the examination of the archives of the single institutes, the first results of which were published in G. Calabrese (ed.), *Archivi delle scuole. Archivio per le scuole. Atti del seminario siracusano, giugno-novembre 2005*, Maimone, Catania, 2008. See also S. Graci, *L'insegnamento nella Sicilia del Settecento. Giovanni Agostino De Cosmi e le Scuole Normali*, Aracne, Roma, 2014.

[34] E. Iachello, P. Militello (eds), *L'insediamento nella Sicilia d'età moderna e contemporanea. Settlement in Sicily in the early modern and contemporary ages*, Edipuglia, Bari, 2008.

[35] On which, in 1992, the contributions by L. Dufour, H. Raymond (eds), *1693. Catania. Rinascita di una città*, Sanfilippo, Catania, 1992, and, later, always by L. Dufour, *1693. Val di Noto. La rinascita dopo il disastro*, Sanfilippo, Catania, 1994. On Noto, in particular, S. Tobriner, *The Genesis of Noto. An Eighteenth-Century Sicilian City*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1982. On Catania, E. Boschi e E. Guidoboni (eds), *Catania. Terremoti e lave. Dal mondo antico alla fine del Novecento*, INGV SGA, Roma and Bologna, 2001. On Avola, F. Gringeri Pantano, *La città esagonale. Avola. L'antico sito, lo spazio urbano ricostruito*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1996. On earthquakes in Sicily, see D. Ligresti, *Terremoto e società in Sicilia (1501-1800)*, Maimone, Catania, 1992, and the volume edited by G. Giarrizzo, *La Sicilia dei terremoti. Lunga durata e dinamiche sociali*, Maimone, Catania, 1996; more recently, S. Condorelli**,** *U tirrimotu ranni: lectures du tremblement de terre de Sicile de 1693*, Società di Storia Patria per la Sicilia Orientale, Catania, 2012.

[36] E. Iachello, *Il vino e il mare* cit.*;* P. Militello, *La Contea di Modica tra storia e cartografia. Rappresentazioni e pratiche di uno spazio feudale (XVI-XIX secolo)*, L'Epos, Palermo, 2001; G. Barone (ed.), *La Contea di Modica (secoli XIV-XVII). Atti del settimo centenario*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2008.

This attention to the spatial dimension results also in a renewed interest in the literary, graphic, cartographic representations of the cities and the territory. In the 1980s and 1990s there had been no lack of traditional stories "through images" of the cities[37], or the cartographic reproductions of cities and territories[38]; likewise, there had been no lack of studies on the travel stories of the *Grand Tour*[39]. Yet, it is at the end of the 1990s, with the works of Enrico Iachello, and, after him, of Militello (who restores the role of Malta in its relationship with Sicily), that this approach changes and makes a significant contribution to the new historiography of the island[40]. By moving away from post-modern approaches, the descriptions and images of the islands – both graphic and literary – are no longer considered as mere illustrations but as authentic sources useful for identifying historically (also thanks to the new opportunities offered by computer science, as shown by Giannantonio Scaglione's works[41]) the processes of creation and definition of the urban and territorial space.

In all of these works, the history of the city is seen as a palimpsest not just of places and forms but also people and society. Urban territory and urban society, together, become a new, exciting research

[37] For example, C. De Seta, L. Di Mauro (eds), *Palermo,* Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1980, and, again in the same year, A. Ioli Gigante, *Messina*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1980.

[38] Regarding Sicily in the second half of the 16th century: M. Scarlata (ed.), *L'opera di Camillo Camiliani*, Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma, 1993, and R. Trovato (ed.), *Marine del Regno di Sicilia. Tiburzio Spannocchi*, Ordine degli Architetti della Provincia di Catania, Catania, 1993; for Sicily in the 17th century: N. Aricò (ed.), *Atlante di città e fortezze del Regno di Sicilia. 1640. Francesco Negro, Carlo Maria Ventimiglia*, Sicania, Messina, 1992; V. Consolo, C. De Seta (eds), *Sicilia teatro del mondo*, Nuova ERI, Roma, 1990; Regarding the 18th century: L. Dufour (ed.), *La Sicilia disegnata. La carta di Samuel von Schmettau (1720-1721)*, Società siciliana per la storia patria, Palermo, 1995. As outlines, see A. La Gumina, L. Dufour (eds), *Imago Siciliae. Cartografia storica della Sicilia (1420-1860)*, Sanfilippo, Catania, 1998; E. Iachello (ed.), *L'isola a tre punte. Maps of Sicily from the La Gumina collection (XVI-XIX Century)*, Regione Siciliana, Palermo, 2001 (also in French); P. Militello, *L'isola delle carte. Cartografia della Sicilia in età moderna*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2004; V. Valerio, S. Spagnolo (eds), *Sicilia. 1477-1861. La collezione Spagnolo-Patermo in quattro secoli di cartografia*, Paparo, Napoli, 2014.

[39] H. Tuzet, *Viaggiatori stranieri in Sicilia nel XVIII secolo*, Sellerio, Palermo, 1988 and 1995 (1st edition: P. H. Heitz, Strasbourg, 1955); or, more recently, the detailed catalogue in 4 volumes by S. Di Matteo, *Il grande viaggio in Sicilia. Viaggiatori stranieri nell'isola dagli Arabi ai nostri giorni*, Arbor, Palermo, 2008.

[40] E. Iachello, *Immagini delle città. Idee della città* cit.; P. Militello, *Ritratti di città in Sicilia e a Malta (XVI-XVII secolo)*, Officina di Studi Medievali, Palermo, 2008.

[41] Also the works of thematic cartography should be mentioned; they began at the end of the 1990s, with the volume edited by E. Iachello, B. Salvemini (eds), *Per un atlante storico del Mezzogiorno e della Sicilia in età moderna*, Liguori, Napoli, 1998, and their methods and techniques were applied for the first time in a practical manner in G. Scaglione's *Cartografia tematica della città di Catania in età moderna*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2012: here the map, created through a philological study of documents and representations, becomes a research tool, a document for interpretation, and not a mere illustrative aid.

subject matter which makes it necessary to reconsider the relationship between the city and its territory, between the city and the countryside which are interdependent both from the social point of view as well as the economic point of view, as already shown by the works of Orazio Cancila and Marcello Verga[42], of Antonino Giuffrida and Rossella Cancila[43] or, for the nineteenth century, of Salvatore Lupo on the "world of citrus" and of Barone on sulphur[44].

A significant synthesis of this approach can be represented by the editorial venture which, under the direction of Giarrizzo and Aymard, led to the publication of four important joint authorship volumes (2007-2012) on the *Storia di Catania* from its origins to the present day[45], a work in which the city becomes an authentic common ground where the various fields of study – the history of the language[46], architecture[47],

[42] O. Cancila, *Impresa, redditi, mercato nella Sicilia moderna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1980 (2ª edizione Palumbo, Palermo, 1993); Idem, *L'economia della Sicilia. Aspetti storici*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1992; Idem, *Storia dell'industria in Sicilia*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1995; Idem, *La terra di Cerere*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta-Roma, 2001; Idem, *I Florio. Storia di una dinastia imprenditoriale*, Bompiani, Milano, 2008. M. Verga, *La Sicilia dei grani. Gestione dei feudi e cultura economica fra Sei e Settecento*, Olschki, Firenze, 1993. S. Epstein's *An Island for Itself. Economic Development and Social Change in Late Medieval Sicily*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, should also be mentioned.

[43] A. Giuffrida, *La finanza pubblica nella Sicilia del '500*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta, 1999; Idem, *Le reti del credito nella Sicilia moderna*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2011; Idem, *Stessa misura, stesso peso, stesso nome. La Sicilia e il modello metrico decimale (secc. XVI-XIX)*, Carocci, Roma, 2014; R. Cancila, *Fisco, ricchezza, comunità nella Sicilia del Cinquecento*, Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, Roma, 2001. Always valid, Giarrizzo and his *Cultura ed economia nella Sicilia del '700*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta-Roma, 1992.

[44] S. Lupo, *Il giardino degli aranci. Il mondo degli agrumi nella storia del Mezzogiorno*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1990; G. Barone, *Zolfo. Economia e società della Sicilia industriale*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2000. Regarding the economic relationships between Sicily and Great Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century, see R. Battaglia's volumes *Sicilia e Gran Bretagna. Le relazioni commerciali dalla Restaurazione all'Unità*, Giuffré, Milano, 1983, and M. D'Angelo's *Mercanti inglesi in Sicilia (1806-1815). Rapporti commerciali tra Sicilia e Gran Bretagna nel periodo del blocco continentale*, Giuffré, Milano, 1988.

[45] G. Giarrizzo, M. Aymard (eds), *Storia di Catania*, Sanfilippo, Catania, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012.

[46] Regarding the history of the language, G. Alfieri's work *I vestigi dei nomi. L'identità di Catania tra storia e mito*, Università degli Studi di Catania, Catania, 2003, and R. Sardo's *"Registrare in lingua volgare". Scritture pratiche e burocratiche in Sicilia tra '600 e '700*, Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, Palermo, 2008, should be mentioned, as well as G. Caracausi (ed.), *Dizionario onomastico della Sicilia. Repertorio storico-etimologico di nomi di famiglia e di luogo*, Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, Palermo, 1994. In 2002, under the direction of G. Tropea and S. Trovato, the project, already started by Giorgio Piccitto, of a *Vocabolario Siciliano* published by the Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani (Palermo 1977-2002) was completed.

[47] Regarding the architecture and the cities: S. Boscarino, *Sicilia barocca. Architettura e città. 1610-1760*, Officina, Roma, 1986 and 1997, and, later, among others: M. Giuffrè, *Barocco in Sicilia*, Arsenale, S. Giovanni Lupatoto, 2008; L. Trigilia, *La valle del Barocco.*

art[48] etc. – meet through a "restricted" (to quote Bernard Lepetit) interdisciplinary method.

Other currents can be also added to these new orientations, for instance, the current of studies on the history of Sicily in the Mediterranean, promoted by Orazio Cancila with a review and a collection of books (*Mediterranea - ricerche storiche*) by means of which the historians (not just the Sicilian historians) can contribute to a history of the island inserted into the wider Euro-Mediterranean context[49].

Neither colony nor periphery

Between the 1980s and 1990s, also the historiography of Sicily would align with the "pendular" return to political history, characterised by that revisionism which made the historical studies of that period possible and which, as observed by Giarrizzo, «applied also to the "backwardness" of Southern Italy, with the search for more flexible and less liquidating historiographical approaches»[50].

The view of the relationship between Sicily and its "conquerors", between the island and the "centres" which, in turn, had ruled it (Madrid, Turin, Vienna, Naples, Rome etc.), therefore, changed[51]. New

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Le città siciliane del Val di Noto, Patrimonio dell'Umanità, Sanfilippo, Catania, 2002; A. Iolanda Lima, *Architettura e urbanistica della Compagnia di Gesù in Sicilia*, Novecento, Palermo, 2001; E. Pagello, E. Magnano, *Difese da difendere. Atlante delle città murate di Sicilia e Malta, Sciascia,* Caltanissetta-Roma, 2004.

[48] Regarding the history of visual arts, see, above all, the superb work on the "Sicilian" Caravaggio by F. Bologna, *L'incredulità del Caravaggio e l'esperienza delle cose naturali*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1992 and 2006. T. Pugliatti's work *Pittura del Cinquecento in Sicilia*, Electa, Napoli, 1993, and C. Siracusano's *La pittura del Settecento in Sicilia*, De Luca, Roma, 1986, should also be mentioned. See also G. Pagnano (ed.), *Dal tardobarocco ai neostili. Il quadro europeo e le esperienze siciliane*, Sicania, Messina, 2000, and B. Mancuso, *Assenze e presenze. Opere, artisti, committenti a Catania nel XVII secolo*, Maimone, Catania, 2011. On antiquities and collecting, see G. Pagnano, *Le antichità del Regno di Sicilia. I «Plani» di Biscari e Torremuzza per la Regia custodia (1779)*, Lombardi, Siracusa, 2001, and S. Pafumi, *Museum Biscarianum. Materiali per lo studio delle collezioni di Ignazio Paternò Castello di Biscari (1719-1786)*, Almaeditore, Catania, 2006.

[49] M. Aymard, *La Sicilia e il Mediterraneo* cit.

[50] «Valeva anche per l'"arretratezza" del Mezzogiorno, con la ricerca di approcci storiografici più flessibili e meno liquidatori» (G. Giarrizzo, *Storiografia. Età moderna e contemporanea*, in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, App. V, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1995, p. 298).

[51] Besides the already indicated outlines and the very important work of C. Trasselli, *Da Ferdinando il Cattolico a Carlo V. L'esperienza siciliana. 1475-1525*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 1982, the following works regarding the various periods should be mentioned here: R. Cancila, *Autorità sovrana e potere feudale nella Sicilia moderna*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2013; N. Bazzano, *Marco Antonio Colonna*, Salerno, Roma, 2003; L. Scalisi, *Magnus Siculus. La Sicilia tra impero e monarchia (1513-1578)*, Laterza, Roma-

approaches and new studies (carried out no longer only using Sicilian sources) made it possible to go beyond the idea of a unilateral centre-periphery relationship within which Sicily passively suffered external control. By contrast, a historiographical interpretation of Sicily would now emerge, in which Sicily took an active part within State agencies with an interactive and dialectic role although sometimes unequal and not always lacking in moments of tension: the riots, revolts and revolutionary breaches which featured in the Sicilian 1600s with the two key events being the Palermo revolt (1647) and the anti-Spanish revolt/revolution/war in Messina (1674-78)[52].

Even studies on the Catholic Church and ecclesiastical institutions have shown the impossibility of distinguishing between Sicilian events and the dynamics of religion and society as a whole[53], as shown, for example, by the indispensable studies by Vittorio Sciuti Russi on the Spanish Inquisition researched not only as an ecclesiastical tribunal but above all as an "instrument of government" (*instrumentum regni*) whose actions must be placed not just in a religious, but also a political, social and cultural context[54].

We have already touched on a historiographical bias of Sicily of "latifundium" from which derives what Domenico Ligresti defines as «two corollaries: the Sicilianist theory of "two nations" with the conquistadors and their descendants who are outsiders and indifferent to *real* Sicilians,

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Bari, 2013; V. Favarò, *La modernizzazione militare nella Sicilia di Filippo II*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2009; L.A. Ribot García, *La monarquía de España y la guerra de Mesina*, Actas Editorial, Madrid, 2002; F. Gallo, *L'alba dei Gattopardi. La formazione della classe dirigente nella Sicilia austriaca (1719-1734)*, Meridiana, Catanzaro, 1996. Still unsatisfactory, on the contrary, are the studies on the Piedmontese period, whereas, regarding the Bourbon period, E. Iachello (ed.), *I Borbone in Sicilia. 1734-1860*, Maimone, Catania, 1998, is still valid.

[52] D. Palermo, *Sicilia 1647: voci, esempi, modelli di rivolta*, Mediterranea, Palermo, 2009; L.A. Ribot García, *La rivolta antispagnola di Messina. Cause e antecedenti (1591-1674)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2011; S. Di Bella (ed.), *La rivolta di Messina, 1674-78 e il mondo mediterraneo nella seconda metà del Seicento. Atti del Convegno storico internazionale*, L. Pellegrini, Cosenza, 2001. On revolts, see also R. Cancila, *Il pane e la politica. La rivolta palermitana del 1560*, ESI, Napoli, 1999, and S. Laudani, *"Quegli strani accadimenti". La rivolta palermitana del 1773*, Viella, Roma, 2005.

[53] Regarding the studies on the religious institutions, on the other hand, see the recent volume by R. Manduca, *La Sicilia, la Chiesa, la storia. Storiografia e vita religiosa in età moderna*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta-Roma, 2012, not forgetting, however, the three volumes of G. Zito (ed.), *Chiesa e società in Sicilia. Atti del I Convegno internazionale organizzato dall'arcidiocesi di Catania*, SEI, Torino, 1995, or the contributions on hagiography, such as those by S. Cabibbo, M. Modica (eds), *La Santa dei Tomasi. Storia di suor Maria Crocifissa (1645-1699)*, Einaudi, Torino, 1989, and S. Cabibbo's *Santa Rosalia tra terra e cielo. Storia, rituali, linguaggi di un culto barocco*, Sellerio, Palermo, 2004.

[54] *Inquisizione, politica e giustizia nella Sicilia di Filippo II*, ESI, Napoli, 1999 and *Inquisizione spagnola e riformismo borbonico fra Sette e Ottocento. Il dibattito europeo sulla soppressione del* terrible monstre, Olschki, Firenze, 2009.

oppressed and poor….; the thesis of "the absence of State" or rather the inability of Sicilians to respect the law and State authority because they are living in a kind of feral society…» The historical, cultural and political motives behind this bias were easily identifiable: «the bourgeois criticism of the *Ancien Régime*, the patriotism of the Risorgimento and the nationalist patriotism opposed to outsiders in the peninsula, the industrialist mythology and class conflict, anti-regionalist statism, and the anti-clericism which identified Spanish power and feudalism as standard-bearers for the Counter-Reformation»[55].

The studies cited above were able to show how «Sicilian feudalism was not a social group enclosed by the Spanish monarchy in a walled garden of privilege guarding a population which had to be ill-treated and dominated, but a transnational *élite* connected to the Italian and Spanish nobility and directly responsible through appointments, honours and ancient institutions of the Sicilian government and participant in clashes and political choices which took place at its heart and at the pinnacle of that grand empire directly and by means of the game of patronage, hangers-on, kinship, political parties and court factions»[56]. An *élite* destined above all in the Austrian and Bourbon 1700s to be converted from the dominant class into the ruling class, and then during the Bourbon 1800s while the relationship between State and society was being redefined, in the rest of Europe, as a group of "functionaries" who tried to redefine their power within the new administrative monarchy.

An example of this is Iachello's work (a summary of which is in the already mentioned *Storia della Sicilia* published by Laterza) on the processes of administrative and socio-economic modernisation originating from the constitutional experience during the so-called English period (1806-1812)[57] and from the Bourbon administrative reform of 1817. The scholar opposed the refrain «a Sicily which did not experience the French Revolution» with a view highlighting the scope of the events which had transformed the island during that period and which could be synthesised in three key points: «a new order in the relationships between the monarchy and the island; a new ruling class, or, in any case, a modernisation of the political and social traits of the traditional ruling class; a redefinition of the territorial equilibriums

[55] D. Ligresti, *Sicilia aperta* cit., p. 72.

[56] Ivi, p. 77.

[57] On which the volume of J. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck and the British Occupation of Sicily (1811-1814)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1956 is always valid, while purely historical contributions on the constitutional experience of 1812 are still missing. Very recent is the doctoral thesis of Agata Laura Cristaldi dedicated to the analysis and transcription of *Il Sicilian Journal di Lord William Bentinck (1812-1814)*, University of Catania, PhD in Humanities and Cultural Heritage, academic year 2013-2014, tutors: Paolo Militello and David Laven.

between the various provincial capital cities»[58]. Furthermore, for the period of the Risorgimento, already Romeo and Giarrizzo had interpreted the revolutionary uprisings (above all, the year 1848) as a watershed which had favoured the national collocation of the Sicilian élites and their inclusion in the European political and cultural debate, both before and after the controversial process of the unification of Italy (1861). Regarding this last event, the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy (2011) was on the one hand the subject of debates and polemics on the disadvantages for Sicily and the South (nearly one hundred scholars and intellectuals appealed to the Governor of Sicily «to reflect on our roots and identity… constructively and not subversively in a relationship which is fundamental to that little modernisation which our Island has achieved in the last 150 years»[59]), and on the other has inspired renewed historiography on the subject[60].

Following this line of analysis we can also insert the studies on the leading economic and political role of the middle classes, as well as the relationship between élites and mass movements; or the studies on the evolution of the political struggle which affects the municipalities, above all, beginning from the electoral administrative reform of 1888-89. Or the recent works on the *Fasci Siciliani*, which highlight not only the "agrarian question" but also mass organizations as well as the selection of the ruling groups.

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[58] «Un nuovo assetto dei rapporti fra la monarchia e l'isola; una nuova classe dirigente, o in ogni modo un aggiornamento dei tratti politici e sociali della classe dirigente tradizionale; una ridefinizione degli equilibri territoriali tra le varie capitali provinciali» (E. Iachello, *La riforma dei poteri locali nel primo Ottocento*, in G. Giarrizzo, F. Benigno (eds), *Storia della Sicilia* cit., vol. II, p. 16). See, also, Alfio Signorelli, *Tra ceto e censo. Studi sulle élites urbane nella Sicilia dell'Ottocento*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 1999; S. Adorno, S. Santuccio, *Notabili e reti notabilari in Sicilia tra Otto e Novecento*, «Archivio Storico Siracusano», XLV, 2010, 327-387. Regarding the moments of conflict, A. De Francesco, *La guerra di Sicilia. Il distretto di Caltagirone nella rivoluzione del 1820-1821*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 1992.

[59] «Una riflessione sulle nostre radici e sulla nostra identità… in uno spirito costruttivo e non eversivo di un rapporto che resta fondamentale per quel tanto di modernizzazione che la nostra Isola ha realizzato negli ultimi centocinquant'anni». The letter may be consulted on the site of «Mediterranea - ricerche Storiche» (last consulted: January 2016).

[60] Above all we remember the works of G. Astuto, *Garibaldi e la rivoluzione del 1860. Il Piemonte costituzionale, la crisi del Regno delle Due Sicilie e la spedizione dei Mille*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2011, and the work on the massacre at Bronte (one of the most controversial and debated events of Garibaldi's expedition) by L. Riall, *Under the Volcano. Revolution in a Sicilian town*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013. Regarding the Risorgimento and the city see amongst others: for Messina, R. Battaglia, L. Caminiti, M. D'Angelo (eds), *Messina 1860 e dintorni. Uomini, idee società tra Risorgimento e Unità*, Le Lettere, Firenze, 2011; for Catania, G. Barone (ed.), *Catania e l'unità d'Italia. Eventi e protagonisti del lungo Risorgimento*, Bonanno, Acireale-Roma, 2011; for Syracuse, S. Santuccio, *Governare la città. Territorio, amministrazione e politica a Siracusa (1817-1865)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2010.

In closing, a final observation should be made on the Mafia. Only recently the studies on justice and criminality, already started by Carmelo Trasselli[61], in the 1970s, and the studies on the Mafia, above all, by Salvatore Lupo and Rosario Mangiameli[62], have questioned stereotypes and commonplaces not only of certain literature but also of sociological and anthropological currents. As already underlined by Giovanni Schininà, in this way certain beliefs (for instance, the exclusive link with the latifundum and the economic backwardness) were questioned and certain "culturalist or behaviourist" interpretations were scaled down. On the other hand, the connections with the ruling classes and with post-unification brigandage, the relationships with the economic structures, the administrative dimensions were analysed through detailed historico-archival investigations: «from such studies – Schininà concludes – the theories on a supposed difference between an old Mafia and a new Mafia (that is, honorary, patriarchal, non-violent, only aiming at stability and social order, almost provided with "morality" the first; violent, terrorist and with no rules the latter) proved to be baseless... After all, the observation of the international connections of the Sicilian Mafia, of its expansion in the United States, of its similarities with other organised crime groups in the South and in the Mediterranean have tended to reduce also the nature of the regional uniqueness in the Mafia phenomenon»[63].

The historiography of Sicily in the early modern age over the last few decades has, thus, experienced a phase of modernisation, rethinking and revision which, with a formidable historical and philological work, has finally started to free the image of the island from commonplaces, false stereotypes and fixed historical prejudices.

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[61] C. Trasselli, *Du fait divers à l'histoire sociale. Criminalité et moralité en Sicile au début de l'époque moderne*, «Annales. Economies, Sociétés et Civilisations», 1973, v. 28, n. 1, pp. 226-246.

[62] S. Lupo, *Storia della mafia. Dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Donzelli, Roma, 2013; R. Mangiameli, *La mafia tra stereotipo e storia*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta, 2000. Among the first examples of anthropological analysis, see A. Blok, *The mafia of a sicilian village, 1860-1960. A study of violent peasant entrepreneurs*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1974. Among the first innovative studies, P. Pezzino's *Il paradiso abitato dai diavoli. Società, élites, istituzioni nel Mezzogiorno contemporaneo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 1992, should be mentioned.

[63] «Da tali studi sono risultate infondate le tesi di una presunta differenza tra una vecchia e una nuova mafia (onorifica, patriarcale, non violenta, rivolta solo alla stabilità e all'ordine sociale, quasi dotata di "moralità" la prima; violenta, terroristica e senza regole la seconda)... D'altronde, la constatazione dei legami internazionali della mafia siciliana, della sua espansione negli Stati Uniti, delle affinità con altre criminalità organizzate nel Meridione e nel Mediterraneo, hanno teso a ridurre anche il carattere di eccezionalità regionale nel fenomeno mafioso» (G. Schininà, *La storiografia regionale: la Sicilia* cit., p. 105).

Moreover, the most recent research works have started to open up to the comparison with other European and extra-European experiences, thus overcoming more and more the insular dimension (both in the contents and in the comparative approaches) with a constant process of "internationalisation" also favoured by the studies on Sicily carried out by foreign scholars often in collaboration with Italian scholars.

Today, however, prospects demand more and more the inclusion of the history of the island in wider contexts. In particular, there is still a shortage of studies connecting Sicilian historical events with the southern and eastern regions of the Mediterranean. From this point of view, a final observation on the shortage of translations of most historiographical work on Sicily into "international" languages (English, Spanish etc.) should be made. As a consequence, Sicily often appears marginalised. The solution to this problem would certainly favour the route – already partly started – in the direction of a more and more comparative dimension.

(*Translation of this text by Agata Aladio*)