

THE MEDIEVAL
AND EARLY MODERN
IBERIAN WORLD

EDITORS

LARRY J. SIMON (WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY)
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ARIE SCHIPPERS (UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM)
DONNA M. ROGERS (DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY)
ISIDRO J. RIVERA (UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS)

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SPAIN IN ITALY

Politics, Society, and Religion
1500-1700

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THOMAS JAMES DANDELET
JOHN A. MARINO

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7: 'The flight of the camp-followers: a mercenary tries to lead the ladies
 each in the wall.' Detail of a tapestry illustrating the Battle of Pavia in 1525,
 rd) van Orley (c.1492-1542). © Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples,
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CHAPTER NINE

NOBLE PRESENCE AND STRATIFICATION IN THE
TERRITORIES OF SPANISH ITALY*

Giovanni Muto

Exchanges Between Italy and Spain in "Spanish" Italy

We need first to clarify an ambiguous point, the term "Spanish Italy," which provided the title for the conference on which the present volume is based, but which is a term that contemporary documents never use to refer to the Italian territories that formed a part of the imperial community of the Spanish Habsburgs. In the records of the various councils and royal secretariats in Madrid, each state is always called by its ancient and original title: the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples, the Kingdom of Sicily, the Kingdom of Sardinia. Occasionally the term *provincia* (province) appears, but only in documents organized as an exposition or narration, or else in memoirs or in the political literature. Although the term has come into common use in recent historiography, it has never acquired a strong significance—that is, it has never stood for a process, real or potential, of achieving a gradual uniformity among political ideas or common administrative practices in the areas under the Spanish crown. Quite to the contrary: each of these territories preserved its distinct institutional and administrative identity during the two centuries of the early modern period. Even where literary and artistic production are concerned, relations between Spain and its Italian provinces seem to have been marked by strong and reciprocal exchanges, but (in the Italian areas at least) these never led to the adoption of Spanish cultural modes. The only significant borrowings that may have occurred were on the linguistic level, in both daily speech patterns and in the "higher" linguistic forms of written speech generated by administrative practices or used in the chanceries.¹

* Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane.

¹ For an excellent analysis of the diffusion of linguistic borrowings from Spanish in Naples and other parts of Italy, see Gian Luigi Beccaria, *Spagnolo e spagnoli in Italia: Riflessi ispanici sulla lingua italiana del Cinque e Seicento* (Turin: Giannichelli 1968).

Although it is true that branches of Spanish families such as the d'Avalos, Guevare, Cavaniglia, Cardenas, Villamarin, Alarcon, and Sanchez were rapidly and solidly integrated into the local social scene in those areas, thanks to an open social interchange between Italians and Spaniards (in the Mezzogiorno in particular), this was in part facilitated by the experience of the populations of those kingdoms in the Aragonese period, when they became thoroughly acquainted with the forms and modes of power practiced by the sovereigns and by the elites who governed Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia as their representatives. This was something that Benedetto Croce understood well: as early as 1917, he noted that the aristocratic society of the Kingdom of Naples "saw the lordship of the Catholic Kings as the continuation of that of its Aragonese kings, and, obliged to choose between France and Spain, [it] felt more loyal following the Spanish banners."² Among the Neapolitans, or at least the majority of them and certainly the privileged classes, this attitude seems to have reflected a more widespread orientation of Italian society toward Spain; it may not have been a genuine political opinion, but certainly those groups displayed an unprejudiced willingness to accept the culture and the value system of Castilian society that was the true motive force of the Spanish political system. Testimony to that frame of mind can be found in two authors of the sixteenth century. In one passage in the *Book of the Courtier* Baldassare Castiglione states that "the customs of the Spaniards are more suited to the Italians than those of the French,"³ an opinion that Tommaso Campanella repeated seventy years later: "Therefore the Italians align themselves more with the Spanish for the unity of their language and the similarity of corporate bodies, customs, and rites than with the French, who have a quite different language, habits, and corporate bodies."⁴

² "Nella signoria dei Re Cattolici vide come la continuazione di quella dei suoi re aragonesi, e, posta a scegliere tra Francia e Spagna, si sentiva più leale nel seguire le insegne spagnole": Benedetto Croce, "La società galante italo-spagnola nei primi anni del Cinquecento," in Croce, *La Spagna nella vita italiana durante la rinascenza* (Bari: Laterza, 1917), quoted from the 5th ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1968), 127. This volume contains other extraordinarily pertinent essays on Spanish language and literature, ceremonies, military spirit, religious sentiment, and more, esp. chapters 8-11 and "Conclusion," pp. 154-270.

³ "Con gli italiani più si confaccian nei costumi i Spagnoli che i Franzesi": Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, ed. Amedeo Quondam (Milan: Garzanti, 1981), 175; quoted from *The Book of the Courtier*, trans., with an introduction, by George Bull (London: Penguin, 1967), 146.

⁴ "Onde li Italiani con Spagnoli meglio allignano per l'unità della lingua e

Although these texts reflect the Italians' openness to the world of the Iberian Peninsula, they fail to explain their willingness to participate in it. The quotations that we have just seen stress some elements that went into creating a sphere of sociability that seemingly penetrated many segments of Italian society, but they contain nothing that hints at anything that shapes a given political option or predisposes people to it. Political options, what is more, were hardly a matter of free choice: Ferdinand the Catholic, Charles V, and Philip II had emerged victorious in wars with France, and the governing classes in Italy—in the provinces under Spanish rule and also in states that enjoyed formal independence—were excluded from all levels of political negotiation. During the course of the sixteenth century the Spanish presence in Italy, which means the individuals and families that came to reside there, grew considerably. In many cases, as one generation followed another, those families took root in Italy, to the point that they came to be considered wholly Italian, even in citizenship. In other cases the Spanish presence was more short-term, tied to the current political situation or to official duties, diplomatic or military, public or private. If in Venice the Spanish presence was circumscribed and tightly controlled, in Florence Spaniards operated a good deal more freely, especially until the 1560s.⁵ In Genoa, a city whose *hombres de negocios* (merchants) inspired respect for very good reasons, the Spanish were in good numbers;⁶ in Rome Spaniards formed a veritable colony and succeeded in influencing many papal decisions.⁷

somiglianza de corpi e costumi e riti che con Francesi che hanno lingua più diversa e abiti e corpi": Tommaso Campanella, *Monarchie d'Espagne/La Monarchia di Spagna*, ed. Germana Ernst (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 216.

⁵ For the Spanish presence in Tuscan universities and in the Order of Santo Stefano, see Volpi Rosselli, "Gli spagnoli all'Università di Pisa in epoca medicea," and Bruno Casini, "Cavalieri spagnoli membri del sacro militare ordine di Santo Stefano," in *Toscana e Spagna nell'età moderna e contemporanea* (Pisa: ETS, 1998), vol. 2, Giuliana pp. 79-90 and 123-187.

⁶ For interesting thoughts on relations between Genoese and Spaniards in Genoa, see the seventeenth century texts in Andrea Spinola, *Scritti scelti*, ed. Carlo Bitossi (Genoa: Sagep, 1981).

⁷ On the Spanish presence in Rome, see Thomas James Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome, 1500-1700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001). Dandeleit analyzes the many forms of this well-established colony, stating that the Spanish "were colonizers for a form of Spanish imperialism that is largely unexamined in the historical literature: 'soft,' or informal, imperialism" (p. 9). He further states that they managed to control and transform, even in an anthropological sense, "traditional religious structures or social 'texts' such as processions, ritualized charity, and saint-making into a Spanish text. At one and the same time they both embraced and

Thus it was that the Spanish presence created potent models that influenced the social life of the Italian Peninsula, although it is perhaps excessive to speak of hispanicization. Even in the Italian provinces dependent on Spain, and even when these provinces were receptive to Spanish customs, they maintained a strong sense of their own identity, which was reiterated and confirmed in both individual and collective practices and behaviors. This means that the term "Spanish Italy," as it is used here, acquires a simple chronological value, designating areas that in various periods of the early modern age lost their political sovereignty and fell within the orbit of the Spanish imperial community.⁸

entered into the traditional Roman world and transformed it into a noticeably Spanish version of the earlier model" (p. 11).

⁸ Recent historiography seems to use the term "Spanish Italy" in much the same restricted sense: see Aurelio Musi, *Mezzogiorno spagnolo: La via napoletana allo stato moderno* (Naples: Guida, 1991); Gianvittorio Signorotto, *Milano spagnola: Guerra, istituzioni, uomini di governo (1635-1660)* (Milan: Sansoni, 1996; 2nd ed. 2001); Elena Brambilla and Giovanni Muto, eds., *La Lombardia spagnola: nuovi indirizzi di ricerca* (Milan: Unicopli, 1997). In the latter half of the twentieth century the term "Spanish" was applied to areas of Italy in different ways, some of them strongly marked in terms of political culture. For a singular interpretation of Spanish Naples, see Francisco Elías de Tejada, *Nápoles hispánico*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Ediciones Montejurra, 1958), only three volumes of which have appeared in Italian translation, under the general title *Nápoles spagnola* (Naples: Controcorrente, 1999-2005). According to Elías de Tejada, Spanish Naples found its identity only within the context of the traditional *monarquía tradicional*, which began with the Aragonese period and lasted throughout the years of viceregency. He sees Neapolitan identity and that of the Kingdom as complementary to that of multiple "Spains," all intent on the "defense of Catholic Christianity, the impassioned maintenance of the liberties of the Kingdom (understood as a perfect and total political body), [and] fervent service to the king, the captain of the campaign of the Counter-Reformation and paladin of missionary Christianity." In this perspective, the end of Habsburg rule in the early eighteenth century brought to a close the historical mission that the author assigns to the "traditional monarchy," but it also signaled the loss of the special identity of the Kingdom of Naples: "Europe vanquished the Spains, and Naples was vanquished by Europe. When the victorious European nations imposed the dismembering of the vanquished Spains and a fatal train of events brought Europeanized hispano-French rulers to the various thrones, Philip V in Castile, Charles III in the Two Sicilies, it signaled the end of the Spains for Naples. The introduction of an abstract, *encyclopédiste*, 'renewal' and Europe-minded absolutism was the prevailing formula in Europe of the eighteenth century under the aegis of France, a formula that a victorious Europe imposed on us": *Nápoles spagnola: La tappa aragonesa (1442-1503)* (Naples: Controcorrente, 1999), 6-7. For a more balanced and more intelligible position, based on a reinterpretation of the history of Sicily in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the use of documentary sources, see Virgilio Titone, *La Sicilia spagnola: Saggi storici* (Mazara: Società Editrice Siciliana, 1948). Although Titone states that "the policies of the viceroys, wholly aimed . . . at bringing Sicily closer to Spain, can be said to have continued in other forms with a slow infiltration in the most vital ganglia of the sources of the island's economy" (p. 23), his concrete analysis of individual prob-

When contemporaries constructed complex theories, stressing the perfection of the political system and the organic nature of relations between the Spanish crown and its peripheral territories, they legitimized Spain's possession of those areas in Italy. The *topos* of the *relox de principes* (the "dial" or "clock of princes") and the metaphor of the human body, whose parts are moved and animated by the head, the noble element, were widespread in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political literature in Spain and Italy alike.⁹ These were not merely elegant theoretical elaborations constructed by refined intellectuals; they had entered into the modes of thinking and feeling of political operatives and government personnel. A letter of Juan de Vega, who served as viceroy in Sicily in the mid-sixteenth century, makes effective use of the image of the sovereign as the prime mover of the political system: "Although the ministers are wise and competent and possess all the other qualities necessary to be good governors, they are in the end motivated by a higher cause, which is their Prince; and if the Prince has bad information, or insufficient experience in the nature of the matter, or for whatever other reason, he moves and governs those inferior planets, who are his ministers, in a way contrary to what would be advisable for his favor and authority and the veneration of Justice, it matters little if the minister is very competent, nor is it enough, because the clear and shining star is the sun and the moon, but when there is an eclipse or cloud cover, they lose their strength and clarity."¹⁰ In the early seventeenth century Baltasar Alamos de Barrientos, the author of

lems (for example, in the agricultural sector or in tax policy) leads him to a less critical evaluation of the Spanish government.

⁹ On these topics in the political literature of the age, see the introduction by J. A. Fernández-Santamaría in preface to Baltasar Alamos de Barrientos, *Aforismos al Tacito español*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1987). The text of Barrientos's *Aforismos*, completed in 1594, was published in Madrid in 1614. See also, Antonio de Guevara, *Libro del emperador Marco Aurelio con el Relox de principes* (Valladolid: Nicolas Therri, 1529) in the modern edition of Antonio de Guevara, *Relox de principes*, ed. Emilio Blanco (Madrid: ABL Editor CONFRES, 1994), which aimed at presenting Charles V with the model of the wise and virtuous king.

¹⁰ "Aunque los ministros sean savios y suficientes y tengan todas las otras partes convenientes de buenos gobernadores son alfin movidos por otra primera causa, que es su Principe y si el Principe por mala información o por no tener entera experiencia de la qualidad del negocio, o por otra causa alguna mueve y gobierna estos planetas inferiores que son los ministros diferentemente de lo que conviene a su servicio y a su autoridad y al culto de la Justicia, poco aprovecha que el ministro venga muy aduertido, ni sea suficiente, por que astro claro y reluciente es el sol y la luna, mas quando se le pone adelante el eclipse, o otra alguna nube, pierden

much-admired political writings, but also a firm supporter of the need to reform the imperial system, sought to reformulate the connection between sovereignty and power in relations between the center and the periphery, stating that the sovereign must be “the king of all and of each individual nation, and not just our king and the lord of those [nations], and with this many will be formed into one realm.”¹¹ Even administrative language sought to communicate to the subjects of the realm that the nature of power was not exclusively directed toward exploiting the human and material resources of a territory, but was in some sense a gift of the royal person, as attested, by the second half of the sixteenth century, by the Instructions handed down to the viceroys and governors of the Italian provinces, which state systematically, “Kings and princes are constituted principally for governing and administering justice to their subjects and for defending them from their enemies; and since I, as King and natural Seigneur of that kingdom [of Naples], owe these two things to the subjects and natives of it.”¹²

su fuerza y claridad”: Biblioteca Nacional Madrid (henceforth abbreviated as BNM), Ms. 1751, fol. 254.

¹¹ “Rey de todos y de cada nacion in particular, y no rey nuestro solamente y señor de ellos, y con esto vendrà aformarse de muchos como un reyno solo.” Alamos de Barrientos also insists on defining the relationship between the sovereign and his subjects: “Every natural dominion regarding the natural society between the vassals and among the vassals with their head, as between the members of the human body and between [those members and] their head. Natural societies are those of male and female, father and sons and families together, and then of several families united with their kin, and then of several united family groups with one soil, air, and climate, agreeing on laws, customs, and offices appropriate to both the one and the other. Another point of agreement is language and mode of dress; another, to end the list, is species, since we are all humankind. The more of these agreements there are, the more dominion is unified and fortified” (“Ogni dominio naturale cerca natural società tra i vassali e tra i vassali col capo, come tra le membra e membra col capo nel corpo umano. Le società naturali sono del maschio e femina, padre e figli e famiglia insieme, e poi di più famiglie unite con parentela, e poi di più parentele unite con un suolo aere e clima, convenendo di legge, costumi e uffici atti a conversar l’un con l’altro. L’altra convenienza è della lingua e vestire; l’altra finalmente è della specie, che tutti siamo uomini. Quante più di queste convenienze vi si trovano, tanto più s’unisce e fortifica il dominio”: Alamos de Barrientos, *Aforismos*, 214.)

¹² “Los reyes y principes son principalmente constituydos para que gobiernen y administren justicia a sus subditos y los defiendan de sus enemigos y pues yo como rey y señor natural de aquel reyno [de Napoles] devo estas dos cosas a los subditos y naturales del...” in Archivo General de Simancas, *Secretarias Provinciales*, Napoles, 634, cc.135–177 (136): Istrucciones de Felipe III al virrey conde de Lemos, 20 april 1599.

*A Typology of Human Settlement in Spanish Lombardy,
Naples, and Sicily*

This sort of reiterated reference to a unity of the political body of the monarchy that at the same time did not annul the diversity or the peculiar nature of its component parts was backed up by a detailed knowledge of the territories subject to the crown. Today we know a good deal more about the structure and the operation of the apparatus of the central government and the peripheral governments, about the role of the royal court, about what forms political communication took, and about the importance of mediation and informal relationships. The Spanish bureaucracy, whose members were trained in the *colegios mayores* and given concrete experience with local governance, seem to us to have functioned rather well and, in particular, to have been able to analyze local contexts on the basis of highly dependable information. The documents preserved in the Spanish State Archives in Simancas attest to a far-reaching network of channels of information, to a variety of sources, institutional and other, that passed on news, and to the quality of the information that passed back and forth between the viceregal courts and the court in Madrid. It is clear that the court managed to obtain an enormous number of reports and data regarding the physical and geographical characteristics of the Italian territories.¹³

¹³ These reports, for the most part redacted by persons attached to governmental offices and, in some cases, by counselors who held high posts, often circulated in multiple copies, which explains why they can be found in archives and libraries throughout Europe. Some sources that seem to me particularly valuable for the quality of their information are: for Sicily, Pedro de Cisneros, *Relación de las cosas del reyno de Sicilia*, redacted in 1584 and available in a modern edition by Vittorio Sciuti Russi (Naples: Jovene, 1990). Sciuti Russi has edited two other texts: Pietro Celestre, “Idea del governo del reyno de Sicilia” (1611), and Pietro Corsetto “Instrucción para el principe Filiberto quando fue al virreynato de Sicilia” (1621), both published in Vittorio Sciuti Russi, *Il governo della Sicilia in due relazioni del primo Seicento* (Naples: Jovene, 1984). See also Alfonso Crivella, *Trattato di Sicilia* (1593), introduction by Adelaide Baviera Albanese (Caltanissetta and Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1970). There is an unpublished “Descrizione de Sicilia,” written in the 1690s preserved in BNM, Ms. 2977. For the Kingdom of Naples there is a description written in the early 1570s in BNM, Ms. 2659. See also “Advertimientos para el Conde de Olivares dados a el 1595, 4 noviembre,” Biblioteca Casanatense di Roma, Ms. 2417; *Una relazione vicereale sul governo del Regno di Napoli agli inizi del ‘600: Relación de reyno de Napoles* (1602–3), ed. Bernardo José García García (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1993). For the Duchy of Milan, see the “Relación sumaria de las cosas del Estado de Milan” (1585), BNM, Ms. 1008; “Relación del Estado de Milan” (ca. 1685), BNM, Ms. 2614.

These reports describe each region, giving all its morphological characteristics from the quality of its soils to its mountains, rivers, cities, and the characteristics of its population. This is followed by a section describing the political governance of the territory, its organs of government, its courts, the organization of cities, the administration of civil and penal justice, military strength, and ecclesiastical structures. Last comes a summary of the area's material resources, products, exportation goods, fiscal resources (ordinary and extraordinary), the public debt, and the contributions that each territory might be counted on to make to the ordinary and extraordinary needs of the crown. All of this paperwork, which normally traveled from the Italian lands at the periphery of the imperial community toward the center, attests, on the one hand, to the smooth functioning of an efficient information network and, on the other hand, to a felt need to base decisions on adequate information and an awareness of the real situation in the various territories. All of these questions were put into theoretical form in tracts and treatises.

One early sixteenth-century writer, Eugenio de Narbona, recommended to aspirant counselors to the Prince that they pay heed to new forms of knowledge: "Information about the land, customs, conditions, and natural propensities of the peoples of the kingdoms of his prince is knowledge necessary for a counselor."¹⁴ Naturally, such data was used with varying efficacy according to the options available, and it often happened, as the minutes of the various councils indicate, that the decisions taken went in a totally different direction from the one the information suggested. In some cases this occurred because special interests dictated the outcome rather than a pure cost-benefit analysis, even when the information collected had specifically advised against such a course. In other cases, however, the material collected was so purely descriptive that it was in fact of little use, or else it failed to present data and events within a grid of hierarchical importance that might have aided political operatives to pinpoint the central elements of the problem.

That gap between the quantity and quality of information available to the political operative of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the abundance of data offered to researchers today provides

¹⁴ "Notizia de la tierra, de las costumbres, condiciones e ajetos naturales de las gentes de los reinos de su principe es ciencia necesaria en el consejero": Eugenio de Narbona, *Doctrina política civil escrita en aforismos* (Madrid, 1604), aphorism n. 125.

(or should provide) a standard by which to measure historians' work. It permits us to redefine the political and economic hierarchies that ruled the territory, or what today we call the political and economic geography of an ancien régime society. Our different perception and full utilization of the data permit us to construct interpretive categories more adequate to defining the political and economic identities of the societies of the territories of Spanish Italy, using such possible categories as the "regional state" or the "economic region." In Lombardy, as Giorgio Chittolini has quite rightly noted, it was between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that territory was organized in ways that for centuries provided the load-bearing structures of its territorial identity.¹⁵ During the early years of Spanish domination, and with the decision in 1543 to institute a new tax survey (*estimo generale*), those areas saw the beginnings of an extraordinary process of change in the equilibrium between the cities and their surrounding *contado* that, although limited to adjusting fiscal burdens, encouraged political awareness among the *contado* communities and used the management of fiscal resources to favor the growing political role of provincial elites.¹⁶ In the redefinition of the internal equilibrium of the regional state that occurred between the 1540s and the 1590s, the decisive role was played, not so much by the organs of government in Milan, as by the Spanish power as such—the governor, the court in Madrid, and the Council of Italy, also in Madrid. Throughout this process in which alliances were made and dissolved between one city and another and between each of those cities and the different social groups operating in the communities of the *contado*, the information that was produced and exchanged (in the form of memoranda, petitions, letters, discourses, memoirs, observations, and replies and counter-replies) was constructed to satisfy legal requirements, but it also displays a logic of quantitative evidence made up of calculations, averages, and evaluations of what was useful to the individual and the collectivity. In short, it testifies to a society in which literacy and the utilization of knowledge were no longer the monopoly of small groups in the cities,

¹⁵ Giorgio Chittolini, *La formazione dello stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado: Secoli XIV e XV* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), xxx.

¹⁶ This process is described in detail in Giovanni Vigo, *Fisco e società nella Lombardia del Cinquecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1979). On the same topic, see the contributions of Giorgio Chittolini, Milena Occhielli, Barbara Molteni, and Chiara Porqueddu in *Studi Bresciani* 12 (1983).

but were a social capital widespread in country areas in small and mid-sized communities that proved capable of producing subjects and representatives equally conversant with the rhetoric of communication and the logic of contradiction.

The growth of this extra-urban world is a dimension that deserves analysis in all the areas of Spanish Italy. The first task would be to draw up a typology and establish a hierarchy among settlements that, rather than being uniquely based on demographic statistics, would also be capable of defining communities by their distinct functional identities. Lombardy provides a useful example of settlement typology and of the distribution of communities within the territory. Obviously, not all of those communities were of an equal dignity or size, but they can be placed within an order that in fact describes a hierarchy:¹⁷

a) The basic unit is the *terra*, or “land.” A number of other terms can also be found: there is the simple *terra*, the larger *terra grossa*, the “locality” (*loco*), the town (*borgo*), the *villa*, and the *cassina* all of which indicate a rural community with little socio-professional stratification. *Terre* were, in substance, agglomerations of fewer than a thousand inhabitants that nonetheless had a political personality, expressed in a representative council of heads of family and consuls (*consoli*). It is difficult to quantify the number of *terre*, but in all probability they counted for under a half of all inhabited centers of the former Lombard duchy.

b) By definition, the *terre* were part of the *contado* of a city and were subject to the jurisdiction of that city’s officials. Still, over time some *terre*, independent of their demographic importance, became known as *terre separate*, obtaining a degree of autonomy from the city on which they were dependent that permitted them, by means of a “privilege” or a pact, to have a fiscal or administrative regime different from that of the other communities in their *contado*.¹⁸ Every *contado*

¹⁷ The schema outlined below is in large part derived from Vittorio Beonio-Brocchieri, “Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo”: *Famiglie e mestieri nel Ducato di Milano in età spagnola* (Milan: Unicopli, 2000), 45–57.

¹⁸ One mid-seventeenth-century document defines the *terre separate* in the region of Novara: “The Valsea, or lands of Varal, which are separate because they delivered themselves to the dukes of Milan under certain treaties, and they do not participate with Novara in paying tribute” (la Valsea, o tierras de Varal, que son separadas, porque se entregaron debaxo de ciertos pactos a los duques de Milan y no concurren con él a los tributos): Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Confmi*, p.a., cart. 5. My thanks to Massimo Giannini for bringing this document to my attention.

contained a small number of these communities: Cremona, for example, had 277 *terre* that were “obedient to the *contado*” and 23 *terre separate*.

c) The next category, the *borgo*, accounted for some thirty centers that had a population between 1,000 and 2,000 and were more clearly urban in nature. A *borgo* normally had a distinct political personality, and it was often the site of an outlying office of the central administration (civic, military, judicial, ecclesiastical, or fiscal) located in the city that served as the center of the region. The *borgo* was often the site of a regularly scheduled market that served to mediate and provide exchange between supply (independent producers in rural areas) and demand (the needs of the urban centers). It is interesting to note that the distribution of these markets by no means reflected the free play of economic forces, but was instead rigidly controlled: for example, the grain sold at the market in Gavirate had to come exclusively from certain specified zones and not from others.¹⁹ This was thus a form of regulated market that served to mitigate the rigidity of commercial exchanges in the ancien régime. Some of these centers also held fairs that widened the circuits of exchange to cover a fairly broad area, thus providing for the placement of crafts and industrial products that would not have found sufficient consumers within their area of production.

d) The fourth category is that of the near-city (*quasi città*). These were centers that, although formally dependent on one of the new regional centers of the duchy, enjoyed particular privileges and a greater degree of autonomy. Their population varied between 2,000 and 5,000, which permitted them to have a more fully articulated form of city administration and a more dynamic social structure. Reflecting many of the characteristics of the *borgo*, they were places of notable economic activity, and although they lacked the formal political structures of the city, they served many urban functions.²⁰ Whereas the *borgo* functioned on a local scale, knitting together areas grouped fairly closely around them, the range of action of the near-cities

¹⁹ See Beonio-Brocchieri, “Piazza universale,” 49.

²⁰ This proposed definition of the *quasi città* is drawn from Giorgio Chittolini, “Terre, borghi e città in Lombardia alla fine del Medioevo,” in Chittolini, ed., *Metamorfosi di un borgo: Vigevano in età viscontea-sforzesca* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1992), 7–29.

obeyed a super-regional logic, and their economic operatives were active even in international markets.²¹

e) At the top of the scale came the *città*, which in Lombardy meant Milan and the eight other cities—Pavia, Cremona, Como, Novara, Lodi, Alessandria, Tortona, and Vigevano—each of which, on the model of a small province, administered its own *contado*, an area subjected to the city's jurisdiction containing scattered *terre*, *terre separate*, *borghi*, and near-cities. In 1600 one M. Cavalli, *procuratore* for the Lombard *contadi*, estimated that the duchy contained 2,209 communities and *terre*, divided among the *contadi* of the various cities as follows: Milan, 1,094; Pavia, 384; Cremona, 284; Lodi, 176; Novara, 133; Como, 60; Alessandria, 24; Tortona, 43; and Vigevano, 11.²² All in all, Spanish Lombardy varied not only from one province to another but also within each province; it was a territorial universe “formed out of many different autonomous entities, of many particular liberties granted to towns, valleys, and rural lordships.”²³

The territorial structure of the Kingdom of Naples presents a slightly different picture. From the late thirteenth century on, the entire kingdom was divided into provinces, of which there were twelve in the early sixteenth century. Not all of these were the site of an *Udienza*, the governing organ of the provincial territory with both administrative and judicial functions. Unlike Lombardy, however, the presence of a city with stronger attributions and greater signs of importance did not imply either preeminence over the other cities in the same province or a particular regime of administrative or fiscal subordination of communities to the provincial capital. Overall, the number of cities and communities in the entire Kingdom of Naples in the early seventeenth century has been calculated at slightly under two thousand. In the 1830s Lodovico Bianchini estimated that in the age of Charles V there were 1,563 communities,

²¹ See Beonio-Brocchieri, “*Piazza universale*,” 56.

²² “Discorso del Cavalli procuratore de contadi dello Stato di Milano all’Ill.mo et Ecc.mo Sig. Conte di Fuentes, 30 ottobre 1600,” Archivio Storico Civico di Milano, Dicasteri, c. 297 (printed), cited in Massimo Carlo Giannini, “Un caso di stabilità politica nella Monarchia Asburgica: Comunità locali, finanza pubblica e clero nello Stato di Milano durante la prima metà del Seicento,” in *Lo conflictivo y lo consensual en Castilla: Sociedad y poder político 1521–1715*, ed. Francisco Javier Guillamón Álvarez and José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2001), 99–162, esp. 116.

²³ Marina Cavallera, “L’alto milanese all’epoca di Carlo Borromeo: Società e territorio,” *Rassegna Gallaratese di Storia e Arte* 307, no. 124 (1985), 47–58, esp. 49.

a number that rose to 1,619 in 1579 and to 1,973 in 1586.²⁴ Although the 1586 figure seems credible and is confirmed by seventeenth-century sources, an increment of 410 communities within fifty years seems unlikely, and an increase of 354 communities (or 22 percent) in only seven years seems absolutely impossible. For this reason, it seems to me that data regarding years earlier than 1586 can be ignored. In describing the typology of settlements in the Kingdom of Naples we can begin with the cities, precisely because they took on characteristics that differed markedly from those of other areas of Italy.

a) From the formal point of view, in the Mezzogiorno the term *città* designated an inhabited center that, regardless of the size of its population, had over the course of time received a royal or papal “diploma” elevating it to urban status. In the Kingdom of Naples the number of centers that proudly bore the title of “city” and could exhibit an ancient royal or papal charter in confirmation of its claim was extraordinarily high. Title to the seat of a diocese went along with the title of city, but it is clear that the high number of cities in each province made it impossible for all of them to be the seat of tribunals or local offices of the central administration. In substance, many cities lacked the structures and functions of production or service that defined an urban center. Some seventeenth-century sources indicate, with relative trustworthiness, that there were 144 cities in the Kingdom.²⁵ These were distributed among the various provinces as follows: Terra di Lavoro, 24; Principato Citra, 18; Principato Ultra, 11; Basilicata, 11; Abruzzo Citra, 5; Abruzzo Ultra, 5; Contado di Molise, 4; Capitanata, 12; Terra di Bari, 14; Terra d’Otranto, 14; Calabria Citra, 10; Calabria Ultra, 16. A good 70 percent of these cities were concentrated in two areas: about 40 percent were grouped around Naples, the capital city (Terra di Lavoro and the two Principati); about 30 percent in the three provinces of Apulia (Capitanata, Terra di Bari, and Terra d’Otranto). In my opinion, the extraordinarily high number of cities means that the

²⁴ Lodovico Bianchini, *Storia delle finanze del Regno delle Due Sicilie* (Naples, 1834–35), in the edition by Luigi De Rosa (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1970), 232.

²⁵ One flourishing genre in the publishing market was descriptions of the Kingdom of Naples that offered cultivated readers a clearer idea of the kingdom and its cities. For the distribution of cities among the various provinces I have made use of Ottavio Beltrano, *Descrittione del Regno di Napoli diviso in dodici provincie* (orig. ed. 1640; Naples, 1671 in reprint ed. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1983).

attribution of the title needs to be verified, since it is doubtful whether all of those centers could have fulfilled the requisites of an urban center. My impression is that in an attempt to enhance the image of the Kingdom, historiography in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries called seats of a diocese a “city”: in the historical literature the areas covered by the cities and the dioceses match exactly, as does their number. In 1671, during a period of demographic decline, “cities” can be found with fewer than 200 recorded hearths, thus indicating a population of under 800 inhabitants.²⁶ In the province of Terra di Lavoro, the city of Fondi had 188 hearths; Calvi, 101; Telesse only 6. In Principato Citra, the ancient city of Capaccio had 102 hearths; in Principato Ultra, the city of Volturara had 95, Vico had 88, Montemarino had 43; in Basilicata, Rapolla had 86 hearths; in Calabria Citra, the city of Umbriatico had 42 hearths; in Terra d’Otranto, Motola had 115 hearths; in Abruzzo Citra, the city of Civita Borella had 91 hearths; in Molise, Guardialfiera had 68 hearths; and in Capitana, Lesena had 31. This list could be much longer if it were extended to cities with as many as 300 hearths, or an estimated population of a bit over 1,000 inhabitants. A further distinction needs to be made between cities (and of course between *terre* and minor centers) that belonged to the royal demesne and those enfeoffed to nobles, native-born to the Kingdom of Naples or not. Even when the balance of power shifted within a city, neither the city’s designation nor its component structures changed. In short, what is meant by a city—beyond its title and the fact that it was normally a diocesan seat—assumes a quite different meaning in Lombardy and in the Kingdom of Naples.

b) The other centers of habitation include a fairly broad range of communities known by two different terms. Descriptions of the Kingdom of Naples use the term *terre*, a word with both an historical and an anthropological dimension. The language of administrative documents and juridical literature calls them *università*, a term that prevailed during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whereas the term *terre* indicated that special circumstances pertained, or that the community in question was part of a feudal barony (as in “le terre del contado di Mareri e baronia di Collalto,” or “le terre del contado di Celano e baronia di Cara Pelle”). Thus

²⁶ Ibid.

the term *università* designates the political and administrative identity of an inhabited center, independent of the size of its population. It signals the administrative autonomy of the community, denotes a territory with defined confines, and implies that it was constituted as a juridical subject endowed with an institutional form of representation (a parliament of citizens, a council, syndics, treasurers, and officials of various sorts) holding legitimate power to administer the community’s resources and to impose, even by force, observance of the rules that disciplined community life. Another term frequently encountered is *castello*, which, as is obvious, refers to the community’s origin in and nature as a defensive structure around which a village or center of habitation developed. With time the military constructions may have disappeared or been transformed into a noble residence, but the toponym continued to designate the center. In the early seventeenth century there were as many as 64 place names bearing the prefix *castello* (or *castel*), a number that rises to 101 in the eighteenth century.²⁷

c) In the typology of settlements in the Kingdom of Naples, the term *casale* designates an isolated village within the territory of a city or an *università*. Nearly all of the larger communities of the Kingdom had lands outside the circle of their walls, forming a rural hinterland of villages and towns whose populations varied widely. There were *casali* of only a few hearths (five to ten) and *casali* of as many as 80 hearths. These communities had no administrative autonomy, but were placed under the civil and penal jurisdiction of the city from which they depended. At least a hundred cities and communities had *casali* of the sort in their surrounding areas, for the most part concentrated in the provinces of Terra di Lavoro, Principato Citra, and Principato Ultra. Some cities had fewer than 35 *casali* (Somma, Arienzo, Caiazzo); others had from ten to twenty *casali* (Caserta, Nola, Lauro, Salerno, Gragnano, Cervinara); still others had more (Naples, Aversa, Capua, Pagani, Nocera, Lecce); Cozenza topped the list with 85 *casali*.²⁸ The cities obviously had every interest

²⁷ For the seventeenth century, see *ibid*; for the eighteenth century, see Giuseppe Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli: Il Mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese (1266–1494)*, Storia d’Italia, vol. 15 (Turin: UTET, 1992), 805.

²⁸ For a reconstruction of the geography of the *casali* in the Kingdom of Naples, see Giovanni Muto, “Città e contado nell’esperienza del Mezzogiorno moderno,” in *Città e contado nel Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno*, ed. Giovanni Vitolo (Salerno: Laveglia, 2005), 289–301.

in maintaining control over the areas containing the *casali*, given that city dwellers preferred to invest in cultivated terrains not far from the city itself, thus reducing the administration costs of their investments and facilitating oversight. In this sense the territories of the *casali* became areas of intense economic exploitation for the cities, also serving to provision their populations with foodstuffs. In this connection the relationship between the cities and the *casali* closely resembles the economic function of the *contado* communities and the dominant cities of North-Central Italy.

In the early fifteenth century the island of Sicily was divided into three *valli*, large circumscriptions of more or less equal size: the Val di Mazara, the Val Demone, and the Val di Noto. During the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the number of self-administered centers of habitation (called *università*, as in the Kingdom of Naples) increased notably, as follows:

1505 = 158	1606 = 208	1651 = 285	1747 = 325
1548 = 178	1623 = 235	1681 = 296	
1583 = 188	1636 = 254	1714 = 312	

This extraordinary increase can be explained by the phenomenon of “new foundations,” initiatives on the part of feudal lords who acquired a *licentia populandi* from the central authorities to create a community in a new locality. The feudatory took it on himself to construct the village, to grant a series of *usi civici* regulating the use of common lands, and to draw up “chapters of foundation” with the peasants who agreed to move to the new community.²⁹ This phenomenon, which arose in the mid-sixteenth century, reached its peak between 1583 and 1653, with the foundation of 88 new communities, while another 30 were founded between 1654 and 1714. Naturally, the inhabited centers of the island, old and new, were distributed in a hierarchy of size and importance. Leaving aside whether they were part of the royal demesne or were feudal holdings, they can be described as follows:

a) In Sicily as elsewhere the *città* represented localities in possession of a title of foundation going back to diplomas granted by the earlier Angevin and Aragonese sovereigns. Normally, the title of

²⁹ Marcello Verga, “La ‘Sicilia dei feudi’ o ‘Sicilia dei grani’ dalle ‘Wustungen’ alla colonizzazione interna,” *Società e Storia* 3 (1978): 563–580, esp. 572.

“city” designated centers in the royal demesne, which numbered 34 in 1595.³⁰ Not all of these had the distinctive signs that usually designated a city: for example, only nine were the seat of a diocese. Many other cities made up for the lack of ecclesiastical dignity by being the seat of a body of the state administration: in the seventeenth century, eleven non-diocesan cities boasted an office of the *secrezia* or included in their urban territory an office of the grain trade (*caricatori dei grani*).

b) A community that lacked the title of “city” fell under the category of the *università*, and the same considerations pertained in Sicily as in the Kingdom of Naples regarding the use of the terms *terra* in historical parlance and *università* in administrative language. The distribution of communities among the three *valli* favored the Val Demone, which projected eastward toward the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples, and which, by the end of the sixteenth century, registered 45 percent more communities than the Val di Mazara and double the number of those in the Val di Noto.³¹

c) The *casali* were less numerous, at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These were more common on the island in the Middle Ages, however, when the term might represent a rural center without defensive walls, a colonized village, an agricultural settlement, or, often, an economic entity incorporated into a *feudo*.³² Unlike *casali* in the continental Mezzogiorno, in Sicily their population seldom amounted to more than from five to thirty-two families,³³ since such territorial structures “were subject to the governance of a juridically superior center, feudal or demesne, of which they and their own lands or *dividae* constituted the *pertinenciae*.”³⁴ It is hard to determine how this form of settlement, which was represented by fewer than ten cities, for the most part located in eastern Sicily, came to disappear in the passage to the modern age. There are two

³⁰ Armando Di Pasquale, “Alcuni aspetti statistico-sociali della Sicilia sotto Filippo II di Spagna,” *Annali della Facoltà di Economia e commercio dell’Università di Palermo* 5 (1951): 1–53, esp. 53.

³¹ Crivella, *Trattato di Sicilia*, 13.

³² The first to call attention to the diffusion of *casali* in Sicily were Maurice Aymard and Henri Bresc, “Problemi di storia dell’insediamento nella Sicilia medievale e moderna, 1100–1800,” *Quaderni Storici* 24 (1973): 945–76. Their theses are discussed in Ferdinando Maurici, *Castelli medievali in Sicilia dai bizantini ai normanni* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1992), 119.

³³ Aymard and Bresc, “Problemi di storia,” 967.

³⁴ Maurici, *Castelli medievali*, 122.

possible hypotheses, each of which would require investigation: the first is that many of these *casali* conquered their own administrative autonomy and became an *università*; the second and contrary hypothesis is that they disappeared in the crisis of the fourteenth century and the ensuing abandonment of rural areas.

Social Structure and Stratification in the Duchy of Milan

Thus far I have attempted to present a typology of the human settlements within a territory—that is, to show how people occupied space and to describe the stable forms that this occupation assumed. The quantitative dimension is surely significant here, expressed as the variation through time of the human influx into the cities and the countryside and as the composition of the agglomerations of houses. These are topics that send us back, in one way or another, to the historical demography of the provinces of Spanish Italy, but that will be excluded from my further considerations. What I propose to do instead is to reflect on the social composition of those societies and their internal stratification in both the urban and the rural context. For a number of years now, historians interested in evaluating the social dynamic of ancien régime society have been more cautious in the use of the overall categories that have traditionally guided historical judgments: as we are all aware, categories such as nobility, bourgeoisie, or the people turn out to be a convenient catch-all for more complex, highly articulated realities. The regional states of Italy in the early modern age, and even the aristocracies who lived in the territories of Spanish Italy, show a striking variety in how the world of nobles was structured and in the dynamics and tensions underlying that world.

There are of course different possible criteria for identifying and classifying the nobility, even leaving aside its hierarchy in Lombardy, where the title of prince could not be given. In what had been the Duchy of Milan (that is, in the capital city and the eight other cities that exercised jurisdiction over their respective *contadi*) one might draw a distinction in the administrative organization of the territory between the city nobility of Milan and that of the other Lombard cities and between Lombard nobility and a nobility of Spanish origin. If instead we adopt access to public office in the organs of government (of either the central government or the city governments)

as a criterion of differentiation, another articulation becomes possible. A first segment of the Lombard aristocracy was made up of families of ancient origin, members of a *nobiltà originaria* that went back to the registration of 1377 but that, by the fifteenth century, had become clearly urban. The strength of this group came from vast and rich landholdings, properties that were often renewed feudal concessions but that it would be difficult to qualify as feudal in any strict sense. Many of those families controlled the nerve centers of the central government of the duchy, placing family members in the Consiglio Segreto, the Senate, and the offices of Gran Cancelliere, Magistrato Ordinario and Magistrato Straordinario, Treasurer, and court Regent, not to mention a number of high ecclesiastical posts. The strategies that such groups adopted were quite diverse, however: some families focused on specific areas, filling one office over several generations; other families worked horizontally, inserting family members into a number of institutions; still others focused on civic offices as well as positions with the central government. A second group among the Lombard aristocracy tended to become identified with the exercise of civic responsibilities, both in Milan, the capital city (in the Tribunale di Provvisione, as one of the sixty Decurioni, or as judges, deputies, or members of the various congregations), and in the other cities (as members of the Consiglio Generale, as a *referendario cittadino*, an *oratore*, an official, or a member of the local magistracy).³⁵ Among this second group as well, although such families were known for their power in urban government, that did not exclude participation in the councils of the central government. Two hundred eight senators were appointed between 1561 and 1706, and 150 of them came from Lombard families. Within that group of Lombard senators, 80 belonged to families from the capital and 70 from families from the other cities of the former duchy.³⁶ A third and final group was composed of members of the new nobility created in the Spanish age, who were for the most part men of mercantile origins or risen from among the ranks of Lombard and Spanish functionaries. In the same period (1561–1706), 54 out of the 208 senators were Spanish, many of them (at least 70 percent) men already well established in Milan at the time of their appointment.³⁷

³⁵ Ugo Petronio, "Burocrazia e burocrati nel Ducato di Milano dal 1561 al 1706," in *Per Francesco Calasso: Studi degli allievi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1978), 479–552, esp. 487.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 503.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 502.

In reality, one characteristic particular to this Lombard aristocracy was a slow amalgamation of the older and newer families, a process that certainly did not annul their differences of origin, but that nonetheless consolidated a tendency to operate according to the public functions they fulfilled. It was, in fact, holding civic office (more than placement within the structures of the central state) that defined the social group that historiography, both older and more recent, has always classified as the "patriciate" (*patriziato*).³⁸ This slow but efficacious process of the integration of the various sectors of the Lombard aristocracy took place within the *collegi dei dottori*, organizations of the legal professions that were "the sanctuaries of the aristocracy"³⁹ and that existed in almost all cities in the duchy. "Autonomous in selecting recruits for the legal profession and the law courts and for judicial functions (thanks to their ability to accredit doctors of law and notaries), these *collegi* also used their connections with the *dottorati* and access to information on the families to regulate promotion to the nobility of the robe. Aside from this, however, the *collegi* functioned as a sort of chamber of compensation, putting into contact sectors of the patriciate that were separated in wealth and influence but whose members were colleagues of equal status within them."⁴⁰ Supporting the notion that these professional associations selected and trained the political class is the fact that between 1561 and 1706, 122 of the 150 senators from Lombard cities had been members of the colleges of juriconsults (72 out of 80 were members of the *collegio* of Milan, and 50 out of 70 were members of the *collegi* of the other cities of the duchy).⁴¹

³⁸ On the Lombard patriciate, see Felice Calvi, *Il patriziato milanese* (Milan, 1865); Dante Zanetti, *La demografia del patriziato milanese nei secoli XVII, XVIII, XIX* (Pavia: Università di Pavia, 1972); Giorgio Politi, *Aristocrazia e potere politico nella Cremona di Filippo II* (Milan: SugarCo, 1976); Franco Arese, "Nobilità e patriziato nello Stato di Milano," in *Dallo Stato di Milano alla Lombardia contemporanea*, ed. Silvia Pizzetti (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 71–96; Anna Giulia Cavagna, "L' 'agire patrizio': Materiali e riflessioni sull'evoluzione oligarchica di una città dominata," *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria* (1986): 107–33; Chiara Porqueddu, "Mercanti e patriziato a Pavia nella seconda metà del XVI secolo," in *Lombardia Borromeaica, Lombardia Spagnola 1554–1659*, ed. Paolo Pissavino and Gianvittorio Signorotto, 2 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1995), 1:515–49.

³⁹ Calvi, *Il patriziato milanese*, 67.

⁴⁰ Elena Brambilla, "Il 'sistema letterario' di Milano: Professioni nobili e professioni borghesi dall'età spagnola alle riforme teresiane," in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura in Lombardia nell'età di Maria Teresa*, ed. Aldo De Maddelena, Ettore Rotelli, and Gennaro Barbarisi, 3 vols. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982), 3:79–160, esp. 142.

⁴¹ Petronio, "Burocrazia e burocrati," 506.

The same function of selection of the political class was fulfilled by the *serrate oligarchiche*, a closing of oligarchical ranks in the mid-sixteenth century that barred access to the city councils, hence to the exercise of all civic offices, to families of recent nobility or mercantile origins. It is possible, however, that this disbarment was applied with less rigidity than it may seem, making it possible to assert that "the Milanese patriciate was never a closed body, and new families were continually admitted."⁴² What can be verified is a less narrow correlation between the two phenomena, in the sense that whereas the *serrate* must have operated with a fairly open net, thus permitting a degree of renewal within the patriciate,⁴³ the exercise of public office was guaranteed to a more restricted number of families, also through the activities of the colleges of juriconsults.

The focus on the identity of the patriciate characteristic of a long historiographical tradition has led to neglect of the more markedly feudal sector of the world of the nobility. Feudalism in Lombardy differed greatly from that of other areas in Italy, in particular, from the situation in the South. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lombardy feudal grants of the Visconti-Sforza era had been followed by a number of modifications and upheavals in the fifteenth century, when a sizeable number of persons invested the wealth they had gained from urban mercantile activities in the acquisition of landed properties, often sold by the dukes as feudal grants. The resulting integration of old and new families of feudal nobility had the effect of consolidating widespread support for the policies of the dukes of Milan. Renewed feudalization, begun in the fifteenth century and in part continued into the sixteenth century, was not limited to human resources: it also included notable economic changes arising from significant investments in land that promoted a more rational exploitation of agricultural holdings—investments, that is, in irrigation, new practices of crop rotation, stabled livestock, the construction of peasant housing, as well as cash rentals and an increase in new types of agricultural operatives.⁴⁴

⁴² For the mechanisms that regulated admission to the patriciate, see Calvi, *Il patriziato milanese*, 49–53.

⁴³ Arese, "Nobilità e patriziato," 74. This statement seems confirmed by Dante Zanetti, *La demografia del patriziato*.

⁴⁴ For an analysis of the situation in one area in which such transformations took place, see Enrico Roveda, "Una grande possessione lodigiana dei Trivulzio fra Cinque e Seicento," in *Ricerche di storia moderna*, vol. 2, *Aziende e patrimoni di grandi famiglie (sec. XV–XIX)* (Pisa: Pacini, 1979), 25–140.

Emphasis on the role of the Lombard patriciate has hindered an overall reconstruction of feudalism in Lombardy and a more accurate understanding of its possibly distinct identity. A distorted reading of Cesare Magni's work on the twilight of Lombard feudalism (which remains to this day the most relevant contribution to the topic) has contributed to neglect of this segment of the aristocratic society of the ancien régime. Magni reconstructs a highly detailed profile of the different jurisdictional descriptions attached to Lombard feudatories. A 1441 decree of Duke Filippo Maria Visconti had strongly limited the exercise of feudal powers, and the same decree was periodically reconfirmed in the years that followed, up to the promulgation of the New Constitutions in 1541. A feudal judge had to be a subject of the State of Milan and hold a degree from the University of Pavia; he was subject to confirmation by the Senate and underwent an inspection after two years. In order to obtain reconfirmation, he had to have the consent of the community over which he exercised his mandate.⁴⁵ Moreover, when a vassal was engaged in a legal dispute with the feudatory, he could recuse the feudal judge, and the law spelled out in detail the reasons for which he could refuse to submit to the judge's jurisdiction. Given such conditions, the exercise of feudal justice operated within clearly defined spatial and jurisdictional limits. First, feudal justice was restricted to the lower level of jurisdiction: the appeals judge who handled rulings emanating from the feudal judge had to be chosen from among the members of the college of jurisconsults—an organ that was controlled by the urban oligarchies—and his activity necessarily took place under the supervision and protection of the highest-ranking city magistrate. Feudatories, aware of the intrinsic weakness of their jurisdiction, sought to make use of another body, that of the *Auditor super feudis*, whom they themselves elected, thus transforming that office into something like a court of appeals. An order of the Milanese Senate dated 11 January 1568 blocked such moves and restated the ruling that feudal jurisdiction pertained only at the lower level.⁴⁶ It should be kept in mind that feudal jurisdiction stopped at the city gates. What is more, the *privilegium civilitatis* covered not only the city dwellers themselves, but also those members of the rural population

⁴⁵ Cesare Magni, *Il tramonto del feudo lombardo* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1937), 169.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

who worked for city proprietors, cultivated their lands, or lived on their lands.⁴⁷

Given this configuration, feudal jurisdiction could not function as an instrument for increasing the power of the territorial lords. This intrinsic weakness of jurisdictional exercise is perhaps what led to the conviction that feudalism was of little importance in Lombardy. In reality, although the feudatory's powers came to be limited in point of law, in real terms they remained great, both as an additional way to exploit patrimonial resources and as a point of reference within the social hierarchy.⁴⁸ Although we have no maps of the overall geography of Lombardy that would show the internal hierarchy of feudalism, either in terms of numbers of communities or numbers of vassal hearths, it is nonetheless clear that the phenomenon pervaded the former duchy. As Magni states, "All of the principal and more important part of the *contado* is infeudated: the regions of Milan, Lodi, Pavia, and Novara are filled with fiefs; the diffusion of feudal holdings is even greater around Tortona and Vigevano; in the Cremona area feudalism is markedly less widespread, but it includes large and rich holdings; only in the Como area is feudalism scarce."⁴⁹ This state of affairs had existed for ages, however, and the process does not seem to have accelerated in the Spanish age: "Out of more than 1,600 parcels of land infeudated in the early eighteenth century, only about one-fourth can be considered to be due to new infeudations on the part of Spain: three-quarters of the feudal lands of the State of Milan had already been subject to feudal encumbrances in the pre-Spanish era, and in the eighteenth century these were either still subject to ancient ties, preserved unchanged, or else were subject to ancient ties only slightly modified on the basis of reinfeudation contracts drawn up by Spain."⁵⁰ Although it seems legitimate to hold that, especially in the higher echelons represented, for example, by the Visconti, Borromeo, and Trivulzio lineages, extensive feudal possessions increased the political power of the high

⁴⁷ Ugo Petronio, "Giurisdizioni feudali e ideologia giuridica nel Ducato di Milano," *Quaderni Storici* 26 (1974): 351–402, esp. pp. 398–400.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 398. This thesis is forcefully stated in Domenico Sella, *Crisis and Continuity: The Economy of Spanish Lombardy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁴⁹ Magni, *Il tramonto del feudo*, 225.

⁵⁰ Domenico Sella and Carlo Capra, *Il Ducato di Milano dal 1535 al 1796*, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 11 (Turin: UTET, 1984), 30.

aristocracy, it remains to be seen what real advantages feudalism brought to those in its lower ranks—that is, those who held title to only a few parcels of land conceded to them as fiefs.

Social Structure and Stratification in the Kingdom of Naples

If this was the case in Lombardy, can we form a similar description of the internal stratification of the aristocratic universe of the Kingdom of Naples and of Sicily? This question has a special significance in the Neapolitan context, where the image of the nobility has always been forced to fit the model of feudalism, or at least has been seen in terms of feudalism. The topic of the Neapolitan nobility, and the nobility of the South in general, has almost always prompted a negative evocation of feudalism, hence of the feudal nobility that drew its identity and its strength (but also its weakness) from its economic and jurisdictional management of the infeudated communities within its territories. Aristocratic society in the South has been interpreted exclusively to fit a paradigm of a privileged and parasite class of people who were in essence rough-hewn and of a low cultural level. That image was purveyed throughout the fifteenth century in a number of texts written by intellectuals and political figures in a number of Italian states, Tuscany in particular. The first to describe Neapolitan nobles as idle and inept was Poggio Bracciolini, writing in 1440.⁵¹ In the 1480s Cristoforo Landino expressed himself in sim-

⁵¹ “The Neapolitans, who boast of their own nobility above all others, appear in effect to locate it in laziness and ignorance. Given over to nothing else, if not to an inert leisure, they live their lives seated and yawning, drawing their living from their own lands. For a noble it is something unspeakable to dedicate oneself to agriculture or to the administration of one’s patrimony . . . They react with horror before commerce as if before the most unworthy and vile occupation. . . . They would prefer to go in for robbery and theft rather than any form of legitimate earnings” (I Napoletani, che vantano la propria nobiltà, al di sopra degli altri, appaiono in effetti collocarla nella pigrizia e nell’ignavia. A null’altro dediti, se non a un ozio inerte, trascorrono la vita sedendo e sbadigliando, ricavando di che campare dalle proprie terre. Per un nobile è cosa disdicevole dedicarsi all’agricoltura o all’amministrazione del proprio patrimonio. . . . Inorridiscono di fronte al commercio come di fronte all’occupazione più turpe e più vile. . . . Preferibbe[ro] praticare la rapina e il furto piuttosto che una forma di guadagno legittima): Poggio Bracciolini, *De vera nobilitate*, ed. Davide Canfora (Rome: Salerno, 1999), 43–44.

ilar terms.⁵² Machiavelli repeated the image in the 1520s, though not without contradictions.⁵³

In reality, however, as early as the first half of the sixteenth century the structure of aristocratic society in the Kingdom of Naples was much more varied than these texts might lead one to think: in the passage from to the Aragonese to the Castilian age antagonistic and contradictory elements had entered into the social and cultural picture, with obvious effects on the political options of society’s leaders. It may be useful, if we want to analyze the world of the nobility in Southern Italy and discern its various components, to borrow the criterion used for Lombard nobility—access to public responsibilities—to draw a distinction between involvement in civic power structures and in the apparatus of the central government.

In the major cities of the Kingdom, pre-established quotas stipulated by city statutes (which were often changed or readjusted in both the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century) regulated access to posts within the *reggimento urbano* for members of noble families and “popular” families. This was in substance a “two-class system,”⁵⁴ although there were also instances in which the government of the city was open to such representatives of the “middle classes” as merchants, collectors of excise taxes (*arrendatori di gabelle*), notaries, and other professional groups. But was it enough to be noble or declared noble to run for city office? The answer to that question permits us to distinguish between two different segments of the urban nobility. The first of these is the *patriziato urbano*, both in the capital city of Naples and in the other cities of the Kingdom.⁵⁵ This urban patriciate

⁵² Cristoforo Landino, *De vera nobilitate*, ed. Maria Teresa Liaci (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1979), 40.

⁵³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, ed. Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 190–91, available in English translation by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov as *The Discourses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ For a reinterpretation of this model in a perspective that compares Italian and Spanish areas, see Gérard Delille, *Le maire et le prieur: Pouvoir central et pouvoir local en Méditerranée occidentale, XV–XVIII siècle* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2003).

⁵⁵ There is no organic treatment of the patriciate in the Kingdom of Naples, in part because little documentation has been preserved. For more recent literature on the topic, see Angelantonio Spagnoletti, “L’incostanza delle umane cose”: *Il patriziato di Terra di Bari tra egemonia e crisi, XVI–XVIII* (Bari: Edizioni dal Sud, 1981); Giovanni Muto, “Gestione politica e controllo sociale nella Napoli spagnola,” in *Le città capitali*, ed. Cesare De Seta (Rome: Laterza, 1985), 67–94; Giuliana Vitale, “La nobiltà

was made up of families who, by dint of self-promotion, following procedures elaborated in customary law but also recognized by public ordinances, had set themselves up as a more or less closed privileged class that held a monopoly on the portion of the civic responsibilities attributed to the aristocracy by the city statutes or other regulations. Identification and recognition of patrician status operated through membership in the *seggi*. These *seggi*, organisms that originated in the late Middle Ages in ways that are not always clear and that existed only in the larger cities of the Kingdom, were thus the structures for aristocratic representation.⁵⁶ At the same time, however, they were the channels through which the governing class of the cities was selected. In cities where the *seggio* was formally constituted, it also referred to a physical space in which the aristocracy gathered—a portico, a small building, or a chapel in a church—to discuss its problems, carry on elective assemblies, and decide what position to take in questions pertaining to city government. Not all noble families in the various cities were members of a *seggio*, a situation that created a number of problems for political stability. In reality, throughout the fifteenth century, inscription in a noble *seggio* was fairly fluid, and the nobility itself may not even have considered membership to be decisive or a necessary requirement for holding civic responsibilities. In the early sixteenth century, however, the *seggi* of both Naples and the provincial cities set up increasingly rigid

di seggio a Napoli nel basso medioevo: Aspetti della dinamica interna,” *Archivio per le Province Napoletane* (1988): 151–69; Giovanni Muto, “Problemi di stratificazione nobiliare nell’Italia spagnola,” in *Dimenticare Croce? Studi e orientamenti di storia del Mezzogiorno*, ed. Elvira Ciosi and Aurelio Musi (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1991), 73–111; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Identità sociali: La nobiltà napoletana nella prima età moderna* (Milan: Unicopli, 1998); Giovanni Muto, “Interessi cetuali e rappresentanza politica: i ‘seggi’ e il patriziato napoletano nella prima metà del Cinquecento,” in *L’Italia di Carlo V: Guerra, religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento*, ed. Francesca Cantù and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome: Viella, 2003), 615–37; Giovanni Muto, “Immagine e identità dei patrizi cittadini del Mezzogiorno nella prima età moderna,” in *El reino de Nápoles y la monarquía de España: Entre agregación y conquista (1485–1535)*, ed. Giuseppe Galasso and Carlos José Hernando Sánchez (Madrid: Real Academia de España en Roma, 2004), 362–78.

⁵⁶ In Naples, the capital city, patrician families were distributed in five *seggi* (Capuana, Nido, Montagna, Porto, and Portanuova); in Salerno in three, in Sorrento in two, and in Trani in four, while many other cities (Tropea, Bari, Barletta, Cosenza, Catanzaro) had only one *seggio*. In cities that had no *seggi*, mechanisms for the constitution of aristocratic representation followed a variety of systems. The division by classes (*ceti*) operated by creating separate meetings for the nobles, or else by registering their votes for each measure in registers kept apart from the ones that held the decisions taken by the city government.

norms for admission, and by the mid-century new families who aspired to the nobility found access to them much more difficult. This “closing” of the *seggi* paralleled a similar tightening of institutional mechanisms regulating the political life of the city councils, which were normally governed by a two-level system of noble and “popular” representation, but in which the aristocratic component was actually made up of a limited number of families. This process of narrowed access first appeared in Naples in the first half of the sixteenth century, then in the cities of Calabria, and later—beginning in the 1550s and 1560s, in those of Apulia.⁵⁷ In any event, it was always quite clear that the patrician condition—whatever the treatises on the topic may have to say—granted no higher grade of nobility. What distinguished the *cavalieri patrizi*—patrician knights—from all the other nobles was the fact that only they were permitted to run for city office.

The urban aristocratic universe was not wholly composed of patricians, however: in the bigger cities of the Kingdom there was a second group of noble families called *nobiltà fuori piazza*, thus indicating that they were not members of a patrician *seggio*, hence could not participate in city government. Those nobles found their situation particularly frustrating, because “not having any part in public affairs, they came to be in their own land as if they were foreigners, in fact worse.”⁵⁸ This was a somewhat heterogeneous group. It of course included aristocratic families of Neapolitan origin and families from other areas of Italy who had lived in the cities of the South for generations; but there also were many families from Catalonia or Aragon who had arrived in the suites of the Aragonese kings or the Catholic kings and Neapolitan families of merchant ancestry who, in the course of two or three generations, had won posts in the public administration or the legal and judicial professions that comported a noble title. The chief aspiration of this quite numerous group (in the capital city alone its numbers equaled those of the patrician families)

⁵⁷ This phenomenon has been noted for Catanzaro in 1559, for Cosenza in 1565, and for Tropea in 1567, and it continued during the early decades of the seventeenth century: see Giuseppe Galasso, *Economia e società nella Calabria del Cinquecento*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), 313–23.

⁵⁸ “Non avendo alcuna parte nei pubblici affari, vengono a stare nella lor patria come fussero forestieri, anzi peggiori”: Francesco d’Andrea, *Avvertimenti ai nipoti*, ed. Imma Ascione (Naples: Jovene, 1990), 244.

was to gain entry into a *seggio* of their city, thus gaining access to participation in city government.

On various occasions during the latter half of the sixteenth century the *nobili fuori piazza* sought to force access to the *seggi* in Naples by seeking the support of the court in Madrid. At one time (the sources do not specify the date) the *seggi* of Naples, thinking to reinforce their defenses against pressures put on them by the *nobili fuori piazza*, appealed to the sovereign for a ruling regarding requests for admission. Philip II (and his successors after him) reacted with great caution. In July 1571, after an attempt on the part of certain barons and ministerial council members to gain admission in the Neapolitan *seggio* of Porto, the king wrote to the viceroy, recommending prudence: "In this matter, do not do anything until you notify us and have our answer."⁵⁹ The sovereign was particularly concerned that if the members of the various councils, the magistracy, and the ministerial offices in Naples became part of the *seggi*, they might form an alliance with the patriciate, thus reducing the scope of the crown's function as a social mediator. This is, in any event, how the royal decree of 13 December 1581 stating that no Neapolitan regent or minister could request admission to the patrician *seggi* should be read.⁶⁰ The *seggi*'s resistance to admitting new families among their ranks held firm throughout the seventeenth century, despite the acceptance of individuals on an exceptional basis, as shown in a mid-seventeenth-century text that states, "For many years now no one has entered the *seggi* by means of their statutes, and if someone has done so, which has been extremely rare, it has been as a favor or through other practices."⁶¹ In the years 1557–58 new requests for admission to the *seggi* intensified tension between the two groups of urban nobles. On both sides they operated like veritable pressure groups, attempting to construct alliances in the court in Madrid, sending ambassadors with lists of powerful persons to be contacted, and seeking to obtain a hearing with the sovereign. Faced with resistance on the part of the Neapolitan patriciate to accepting them in their *seggi*, the *nobili fuori piazza* suggested that two additional *seggi* be

⁵⁹ "En este negocio no se haga novedad hasta de dar nos notizia y se tengais respuesta nuestra": Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli (BNN), Ms. XI.A.22, fol. 146.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 314.

⁶¹ "Sono tanti anni che ne li seggi non vi è entrato niuno per la via di li loro statuti e s'alcuno v' entrato, il che è stato rarissimo, è stato per favore o altre pratiche": Real Biblioteca de Madrid, Ms. II 2466, fols. 250–99.

created for the new nobility. In their petition to the sovereign they quite cleverly argued that the two new *seggi* would in fact form "two columns and two strong fortified castles in your service: not so much because there are among us some eighty Spanish families, as because we all would be dependent on the grace and the justice of Your Majesty."⁶² On this occasion, as on others when the same suggestion was made (for example during the revolt of 1647–48), the sovereign either sought to gain time or gave an extremely ambiguous response, and in fact the question was set aside. One evident result, however, was that the division of the urban nobility into two groups—the patriciate of the *seggi* and the *nobili fuori piazza*—added to political and social instability (in the capital city of Naples in particular), thus accentuating the mediating function of the crown and of the viceroy as the direct representative of the crown in the governance of the Kingdom.

The aristocratic universe was not wholly concentrated in the cities: by its very nature it expanded throughout the territory, which it sought to shape to its values. One value particular to this world was an internal differentiation, a criterion that signaled differences of power, wealth, and precedence by means of a hierarchy within the noble status that was reflected in the ranks within the titled nobility, the *nobiltà titolata*. In this third segment of aristocratic society titles (prince, duke, marquis, count, and baron) to inhabited fiefs were granted by the sovereign, thus transmitting to the title holders the status of "lords of vassals." It is in this sense and in practice that the titled nobility coincided with what has traditionally been called feudalism in the Kingdom of Naples. Quantitatively speaking, this social group (as was the case in other European lands) increased notably, tripling its numbers between the 1580s and the 1670s.⁶³ Historians have always displayed a great interest in this segment of the nobility in both its political and its economic characteristics. I am more interested in understanding whether the titled nobility in

⁶² "Due colonne e due castella fortissime in servizio suo; non tanto per esserci fra noi circa ottanta famiglie spagnole, come perché dependeremo tutti dalla grazia e giustizia della Maestà Sua": quoted in Francesco Palermo, ed., "Narrazioni e documenti sulla storia del Regno di Napoli dall'anno 1522 al 1667," *Archivio Storico Italiano* IX (1846): 147–199, esp. 179.

⁶³ Rosario Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli: Le origini (1585–1647)* (Bari: Laterza, 1967; 1987), 188–91; Muto, "Problemi di stratificazione nobiliare nell'Italia spagnola," 88.

the Kingdom of Naples, given its feudal characteristics, can be considered a group genuinely opposed to the urban nobility.

Documentary sources relative to the mid-sixteenth century offer some answers to my question. In 1557 the feudal nobility in the Kingdom can be summarized in these terms: "The [noble] houses with title to feudal holdings are a social body of 558 individuals bearing 327 family names who hold title to 714 lordships corresponding to 1,592 [properties], divided among cities, landholdings, [and] infeudated villages, for a population of 329,102 vassals, representing 78 percent of the population of the Kingdom."⁶⁴ There were internal differences within this feudal nobility, however. A first group of six great families (Carafa, Sanseverino, d'Avalos d'Aquino, and Pignatelli in the *seggio* of Nido and Caracciolo and Orsini in the *seggio* of Capuana) controlled 417 communities and 32 percent of all subject vassals; these families were all titled nobility and all were inscribed in the *seggi* of the capital city of Naples. A second group of eleven families controlled 306 communities, with 25.51 percent of all vassals. These families were also all of the titled nobility, and 63.63 percent of them were inscribed in the *seggi* of Naples. A third group was made up of 39 families, who controlled 323 communities with 23.10 percent of all vassals. Among this third group of families 71.79 percent were of the titled nobility, but only 53.84 percent were members of Neapolitan *seggi*. These three groups were followed by another three groups of feudal nobles who controlled fewer and fewer communities and vassals. In these three last groups the families who belonged to the titled nobility were noticeably fewer than the families who were members of Neapolitan *seggi*. For the purposes of this analysis it thus seems evident that whereas the highest echelons of the feudal nobility (the first three groups) were composed of families in large part from titled houses who were members of the *seggi* of Naples, the lesser echelons of the feudal nobility were represented by families that had not managed to obtain a title from the crown, even though many of them came from the urban nobility.

The last and lowest segment of the noble world was made up of untitled barons, men of bourgeois origins or from families of unrec-

⁶⁴ Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Dislocazione territoriale e dimensione del possesso feudale nel regno di Napoli a metà Cinquecento," in *Signori, patrizi, cavalieri in Italia centro-meridionale nell'età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome: Laterza, 1992), 31–75, esp. p. 63. Cfr. Muto, "Immagine e identità dei patrizi cittadini," pp. 372–373.

ognized nobility, not members of the cities' *seggi*. Such men could hope to acquire feudal title to a small (often very small) community, and when they managed to do so, they exercised all the powers and functions connected with the role of feudatory, but often without the privilege of using the title of count, marquis, or baron. We can thus consider this type of feudalism as a form of investment in which profits were dependent on the exploitation of local resources, requiring the continual presence of the untitled baron in the community infeudated to him. For that reason we can conclude that this group was formed of men native to the region and strongly connected to it who were capable of making their investment pay. This is the sense in which it seems to me we should understand Francesco d'Andrea, for whom investment in the acquisition of a fief was wholly legitimate, even for non-nobles, on the condition that "they think of procuring [property] not too far from Naples" and that they refrain from ever seeking "any title, both in order not to disqualify themselves for the legal profession and because nothing can come of titles but ruin and disesteem of the house."⁶⁵ In the current state of scholarship we know very little about this lesser level of the nobility, and the sources themselves do not permit us to quantify this group with any exactitude. According to Rosario Villari, it was not large, never numbering more than some five hundred persons.⁶⁶

Thus far our investigation of the Neapolitan nobility has focused on access to posts in the city government and control over landholdings as criteria of social identity. There is a third way to measure the sphere of action and the contractual capacities of the nobility in relation to its internal stratification, which is through access to the more important offices of the central government. The prevailing interpretation, based on both contemporary evidence and more recent sources, tends to depict a primacy of the *togati*—magistrates and judges—over the nobility. As early as during the sixteenth century, the Spanish crown is seen as favoring a process of gradual insertion of a personnel of non-aristocratic extraction into the highest posts of the central apparatus of Neapolitan government. The *togati* of Naples—doctors' of law who came in large part from the

⁶⁵ "Che si consideri di procurare che non sian troppo lontani da Napoli"; "mai alcun titolo, si per non rendersi inabili all'avvocazione, si perché da titoli non potrebbe seguire altro che la ruina e la disestimazione della casa": D'Andrea, *Avvertimenti ai nipoti*, 270–71.

⁶⁶ Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola*, 191.

mercantile middle class and from the “civic class” of jurists, lawyers, and the professions—are pictured as taking control of the central institutions, the Consiglio Collaterale in particular, thus limiting the action of the viceroy himself and relegating nobles to a totally marginal position. This process is thought to have already been evident during the 1520s and to have reached a decisive turning point in October 1542, when, at the urging of the viceroy, Pedro de Toledo, Emperor Charles V decreed the closing of the chancellery of the Consiglio Collaterale, arguing that among the problems treated by that body, those of *estado y guerra* could be handled by all the council members, nobles included, whereas questions relative “to things of justice and law suits” were better reserved to the regents of the chancery and the viceroy.⁶⁷ During Pedro de Toledo’s years as viceroy (1532–53), “the difference of functions between ‘the laity’ and the *togati* gradually took on a class significance, because Spanish policy was clearly aimed at removing the nobles from the summits of the administration. The *legos*, or ‘laymen,’ of the Collaterale and the *idiotas* [non-doctors of law] of the Sommaria were certainly all nobles.”⁶⁸

There is no reason to doubt that this strategy is a tell-tale thread running throughout the history of relations between the Spanish crown and its Neapolitan province, but it may nonetheless be useful to offer a few further reflections regarding the timing and the manner in which such an operation was put into effect. The Consiglio Collaterale, as we have seen, stood at the summit of the institutional hierarchy of the Kingdom of Naples and was the most important government structure. The viceroy served as its presiding officer, and it was organized into two sections: the *Collaterale di Giustizia*, also referred to as the *Collaterale di toga* or *di cappa lunga* (of the long cloak), whose membership was comprised uniquely of *reggenti di cancelleria* (for many years three in number); and the *Collaterale di Spada*, or *di cappa corta* (of the short cloak), with a membership that included the same regents, but also a number of council members, both noble and non-noble, appointed by the sovereign. In order to understand to what extent nobles and non-nobles participated in the central government

⁶⁷ “A las cosas de justicia y de partes”: This is the interpretation given in Renata Pilati, *Officia Principis: Politica e amministrazione a Napoli nel Cinquecento* (Naples: Jovene, 1994), 245–46.

⁶⁸ Raffaele Ajello, *Una società anomala: Il programma e la sconfitta della nobiltà napoletana in due memoriali cinquecenteschi* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane/Consorzio Editoriale Fridericiana, 1996), 24.

through service in this magistracy, I shall focus on the group of the *reggenti di cancelleria*, clearly the most significant nucleus of this ministerial body. During the entire period of Spanish presence, 88 men were named *reggenti di cancelleria*.⁶⁹ In the years from 1507 to 1558, 18 regents were named, 8 of whom were natives of the Kingdom of Naples, patricians *di seggio*, and doctors of law. During the years 1561 to 1648, 37 regents were named, 24 of them Spanish and 13 native-born. Among the latter, 6 were patricians *di seggio* (and four of them doctors of law). During the final years of the Spanish period, from 1649 on, nominations reflect a greater degree of mobility: 16 of the 33 regents named were Spanish and 17 were natives of the Kingdom. Only three of the latter group were patricians *di seggio* and doctors of law.

These figures lead to some interesting and somewhat surprising conclusions:

a) In all three of the periods given above there is an approximate equilibrium between Spanish and native-born personnel in these posts. We should keep in mind that the pragmatic, *De officiorum provisione* (1550), which was the document that regulated the division of title to offices between Neapolitans and men from outside the Kingdom, did not stipulate the nationality of the regents of the Collaterale, which means that the crown had a freer hand in naming persons whom it considered worthy of trust;

b) In the age of Charles V a compact group of regents were both patricians and doctors of law. It is thus possible that the urban nobles who occupied the post of regent in this period (names such as Loffredo, Muscettola, Albertino, and Pignone) sought to differentiate themselves from the titled nobility and to put themselves forward as a dependable ally of the crown by lending support to the crown’s project of streamlining the apparatus of government;

c) Possessing a law degree—being a *togato*—was thus not incompatible with being a patrician *di seggio* or a member of the urban nobility. What is more, throughout the first half of the sixteenth century

⁶⁹ Finding one’s way among the various documentary sources is not an easy task because all of them are incomplete. Researching the decrees and the privileges of nomination should be carried out directly, using the resources of the Archivo General de Simancas and the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. The calculations that appear in the text are based on the data given in Gaetana Intorcchia, *Magistrature del Regno di Napoli: Analisi prosopografica, secoli XVI–XVII* (Naples: Jovene, 1987), data that, although incomplete, are homogeneous and seem plausible.

the nobility showed itself open to the civilization of letters on a number of occasions;

d) The patrician component in the chancellery lessens gradually as time went by, but it was still significant until the revolt of 1647–48;

e) Only after Masaniello's Revolt did the non-noble *togati* seem to have gained complete control of the chancellery.

Less extensive surveys hint that the presence of Neapolitans—specifically, of *togati* of bourgeois extraction—was strong in the other organs of the central government, in particular those concerned with economic and financial matters—the Camera della Sommaria, the Scrivania de Razione, and the Tesoreria Generale.⁷⁰ The Spanish presence in governmental institutions was thus a good deal less pervasive than has been thought, confirming a deliberate choice on the part of the Spanish to construct alliances with the local elites so as to broaden consensus with the actions of the crown. Obviously, such alliances were not restricted to the level of institutional administration, but rather involved the full range of Neapolitan and Southern society. Privileging a relationship with civil servants in the institutions of government by no means excluded establishing equally solid relations with other social groups, even with the nobility, in other contexts. As for the Neapolitan nobility, although its numbers were few in terms of percentage of the population, it was not excluded from high political office, especially during the sixteenth century. Ettore Pignatelli, count of Monteleone, was viceroy of Sicily from 1517 to 1534; Alfonso d'Avalos, marquis del Vasto, was governor of Milan between 1538 and 1546; Francesco d'Avalos, marquis of Pescara, was first the governor of Milan (1560–1563), then viceroy of Sicily (1568–1571); Marino Caracciolo was first ambassador to Milan, then governor of that city (1536–37); Marcello Pignone, marquis d'Oriolo, was general visitor in Sicily from 1562 to 1564.

Without casting any doubt on the primacy of the *civili* in the long run, it is interesting to note that the civil servant class had no monopoly on the “toga.” Legal training needs to be contextualized within the long term of the Spanish presence, both in the Kingdom of

⁷⁰ For a survey of the economic and financial branches of the government of the Kingdom of Naples, see Giovanni Muto, “Meccanismi e percorsi della mobilità socio-professionale nell'apparato ministeriale: I funzionari della camera della Sommaria di Napoli tra XVI e XVII secolo,” in *Felipe II y el Mediterráneo*, ed. Ernest Belenguer Cebrià, 4 vols. (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999), 2: 379–94.

Naples and elsewhere. The history of the Duchy of Milan offers confirmation that there was no rigid opposition between nobles and *togati*. In Lombardy many patricians were *togati* and one generation after another in the great aristocratic houses followed the route of “service to the crown” in governmental institutions after being filtered through the Collegio dei Giureconsulti, the association of the legal profession. It is not by chance that one mid-seventeenth-century Milanese text states: “The famous Count of Fuentes put it well [when he said] that this State was a Republic of *togati*.”⁷¹

Social Structure and Stratification in the Kingdom of Sicily

By the criteria used for the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples, aristocratic society in Sicily seems quite different in a number of ways. In Sicily the feudal nobility had already undergone rapid change before the sixteenth century. According to Henri Bresc, “Out of 426 feudal and/or knightly families . . . surveyed between 1300 and 1349, only 94 still existed after 1400, that is, barely 22 percent.”⁷² That portion of the nobility in fact coincided with the *nobiltà titolata*, which grew little in numbers throughout the Cinquecento, never arriving at more than 98 holders of a title. The multiplication of titles was, by and large, a phenomenon of the seventeenth century, when the number of beneficiaries nearly doubled. This is the group usually referred to in historical literature as “the baronage.” “*Barone* includes all of the feudal families, which for that reason was called *baronaggio*.”⁷³ The feudal nobility was not homogeneous in its social identity, however. During the course of the sixteenth century we can identify 141 families, belonging to 108 lineages, whose origins classify them in four categories: the ancient baronage, a baronage of Spanish origin, a baronage of Italian origin (Tuscan in

⁷¹ “Diceva adunque bene il famoso conte di Fuentes, che questo Stato era una Republica di togati”: Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, count of Fuentes, was governor of the Duchy of Milan between 1600 and 1610. This statement, taken from a text by Corrado Gonfalonieri, can be found in Signorotto, *Milano spagnola*, 291.

⁷² Henri Bresc, “La feodalizzazione in Sicilia dal vassallaggio al potere baronale,” in *Storia della Sicilia*, ed. Rosario Romeo, 10 vols. (Naples: Società Editrice Storia di Napoli e della Sicilia, 1977–81), vol. 3 (1980), 501–543, esp. 508.

⁷³ Antonio Mango di Casalgerardo, *Sui titoli di barone e di signore in Sicilia: Ricerche storico-giuridiche* (Palermo: A. Reber, 1904), 71.

particular), and an autochthonous Sicilian baronage.⁷⁴ During the course of the sixteenth century the first two of these categories (the ancient baronage and the Spanish baronage) shrank in comparison with the other two, but it is interesting that family origin did not produce genuine differences and that what we see is rather a process of amalgamation.

In the Quattrocento, in Sicily as elsewhere, a *nobiltà civica* grew up in the major cities that sought to restrict the process of access to public office. The selection mechanism was a *mastra* of the nobility, a list of families that had occupied civic office in the past and were held to possess the requisites for aristocratic status. The names of those elected to city offices were taken from these lists. Unlike the *seggi* of Naples, the *mastre* did not presuppose a physical location in which the nobility could gather, nor did it come to designate a political subject who deliberated on the city's problems. The *mastra* of course changed through time: until the mid-sixteenth century, it designated a highly fluid group, which only later became more rigid with the creation of closed lists (*mastre serrate*). The first *mastra* was drawn up in Catania in 1432, where it served as a means for providing a list of persons eligible to fill various posts. Even within this closed group, however, such posts were monopolized by a rather small number of families, thus effectively limiting their circulation. During the period 1601–1700, 712 persons from 52 families were named to the three most important municipal offices (those of *patrizio*, *capitano*, and *giurato*), and 123 of those 52 families seem to be newly ennobled as they do not appear on sixteenth-century lists. The most relevant piece of information, however, is the fact that two-thirds of all holders of top posts come from only eight families, first among them the Paternò family with 146 designations.⁷⁵ The same phenomenon can be seen in Siracusa, where a *mastra* was drawn up as early as 1549 in which a small number of families account for at least one-half of all designations to high office.⁷⁶ Caltagirone presents an interesting case. There a 1569 survey identifies 157 gentlemen's "hearths," representing 70 aristocratic houses, the equivalent of 5.62

⁷⁴ Domenico Ligresti, *Feudatari e patrizi nella Sicilia moderna (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Catania: C.U.E.C.M., 1992), 72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 182–83.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 190–98.

percent of the population.⁷⁷ In reality, however, many of those families do not appear on the city *mastra* for that same year, thus confirming that how the community defined the criteria for aristocratic status differed from how the nobles perceived themselves. A second *mastra* in 1661 added new families, but it created two separate rolls, distinguishing between first-class and second-class nobles. Public offices (*patrizi*, *capitani*, *giurati*) were reserved to nobles of the first class, while nobles of the second class were guaranteed only admission to the city council. The mechanism of the *mastre* must also have operated in many other smaller cities, as it did in Bivona,⁷⁸ while in Messina and other larger cities the presence of an urban nobility was long balanced by the role of the *popolari*. The Messina *mastra*, created in 1519, listed nobles more as individuals than as representatives of the various aristocratic families.

The aristocratic world in Palermo operated quite differently. In some ways its divisions resembled those of Naples, although in Palermo the urban nobility was not structured in *seggi*,⁷⁹ as in Naples, or listed in *mastre*, as in other Sicilian cities. Palermo's role as the capital city of Sicily (a role always disputed by Messina)⁸⁰ did much to increase the city's population, and thanks to the many nobles and merchants attracted to the city, it displayed a high degree of social mobility. During the fifteenth century, access to public office was regulated by a procedure calling for the compilation of lists of eligible persons, from which the out-going officials and the royal commissioner chose new office holders. In 1472, however, the selection of new officials was put in the hands of the viceroy, who chose them from among the lists that had been compiled.⁸¹ Generally speaking, this same procedure was maintained in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although appointments for the major offices in the city (*pretore*, *capitano*, and three *giudici civili*), in principle made by the

⁷⁷ Giacomo Pace, *Il governo dei gentiluomini: Ceti dirigenti e magistrature a Caltagirone tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Rome: Il Cigno/Galileo Galilei, 1996), 138.

⁷⁸ Antonino Marrone, *Bivona, città feudale*, 2 vols. (Caltanissetta and Rome: Sciascia, 1987), 1:170–71.

⁷⁹ The special characteristics of Palermo were described in 1593 by a Neapolitan functionary, Alfonso Crivella, who was sent to Sicily in the late sixteenth century: see Crivella, *Trattato di Sicilia*, 6–4.

⁸⁰ Francesco Benigno, "La questione della capitale: Lotta politica e rappresentanza degli interessi nella Sicilia del Seicento," *Società e Storia* 47 (1990): 27–64.

⁸¹ Valentina Vigiano, *L'esercizio della politica: La città di Palermo nel Cinquecento* (Rome: Viella, 2004), 114–16.

sovereign, were made on the basis of a three-person short list of candidates forwarded by the viceroy to the Council of Italy in Madrid. It was not stipulated in this procedure that the elected officials must be noble, much less did it specify a particular type of noble. The requisite qualifications were Palermitan citizenship, appropriate age (judged on the basis of experience, not years), and a number of somewhat vague qualities, such as nobility, maturity, goodness, and prudence.⁸² Although in its form this process was less oriented toward discrimination by social origin, there was nevertheless an increasing tendency, in the seventeenth century, for the office of *pretore* to be occupied by a member of the titled nobility, leaving little room for members of the newer, non-titled families.⁸³

All of this makes it difficult to view the urban patriciate of Sicily as a group endowed with a distinctive identity. The power oligarchies that operated in the cities seem to have had little self-awareness as a social class. Although they recognized internal distinctions, these were not used as the basis for legitimate pursuit of public office, as was the case in Naples. In a text from the 1620s, *Del Palermo restaurato*, Vincenzo Di Giovanni differentiates between three segments within the aristocratic world: within the society of *cavalieri* some belonged “to the order of magistrates, captains, and senators,” thus forming an urban nobility in the strict sense; some were “feudal barons” or holders of fiefs; and some could properly be called “titled nobles” (princes, dukes, marquises, and counts).⁸⁴ Di Giovanni’s description of the structure of the aristocracy leaves out some lesser levels of the noble world, such as *cavalieri regi*, persons who had the right to preface their names with the noble “don,” and *cavalieri aurati*. Within the operations of the municipal government these distinctions operated only in part, however, the various categories of noble combining, despite internal tensions, to form a governing elite capable of establishing a generally stable equilibrium and bound together by a common interest in opposing the lower classes. In 1714 one gentleman scholar used an image to describe the form of the city government of Caltagirone that would fit many Sicilian cities of the

time: “This city has never admitted the slightest Democracy or participation of popular government, but has maintained itself in the Aristocracy of the closed Nobility.”⁸⁵

Although the Sicilian nobility exerted broad control over the territory and its economic resources, it never succeeded in bringing the apparatus of the central government under its hegemony. In theory, two things facilitated that aim. On the one hand, the Sicilians held that the relationship linking their kingdom to the Spanish crown was contractual in nature; Sicily was not a kingdom conquered with force of arms, like the Kingdom of Naples, it was a kingdom “subject to a pact and voluntarily maintained” that had freely agreed to the conditions of its adhesion to the imperial community.⁸⁶ Scipione di Castro (ca. 1520–1588) said of the Sicilians’ aim in this regard, “They believe that they have acquired great merit with the crown of Spain for having consigned themselves to it spontaneously. They think that they deserve respect of all the points of the agreement relative to their submission.”⁸⁷ In the political situation of the sixteenth century, all of this was of course little more than a rhetorical feint, but Sicilians found it reassuring and, in any event, their claims do not seem to have been contested by the Spanish court, which augmented their bargaining power with that body. Moreover, the Spanish crown had recognized the privilege of nationality in connection with nominations to the central apparatus of government, a move that (at least in theory) prevented the nomination of Spaniards to the Sicilian administration. Still, the island’s nobility never managed to be seen by the crown as a credible and efficacious governing elite, among other reasons, because in all lands of the imperial community the Spanish sovereigns put little faith in a public administration wholly entrusted to the nobility. For that reason, from the early decades of

⁸⁵ “Non ha mai questa città ammesso Democrazia veruna o partecipazione di governo popolare, ma s’è conservata nell’Aristocrazia della Nobiltà serrata”: Francesco Aprile, *Specialità degli ossequi e del Giubileo della Gratissima Città di Caltagirone . . .* (Catania, 1714), quoted in Pace, *Il governo dei gentiluomini*, 308.

⁸⁶ The definition is from the Sicilian jurist Mario Cutelli in Vittorio Sciuti Russi, *Astrea in Sicilia: Il ministero togato nella società siciliana dei secoli XVI e XVII* (Naples: Jovene, 1983), 72.

⁸⁷ “Pactionado y entregado voluntariamente”; “Stimano di aver acquisito grandi meriti presso la corona di Spagna, per essersi consegnati spontaneamente ad essa. Credono che a loro sia dovuto il rispetto di tutti quei punti dell’accordo relativo alla loro sottomissione”: Scipione Di Castro, *Avvertimenti di Don Scipio Di Castro a Marco Antonio Colonna quando andò viceré di Sicilia*, ed. Armando Saitta (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1950), 50.

⁸² Geltrude Macri, “La nobiltà senatoria a Palermo tra Cinquecento e Seicento,” *Mediterranea: Ricerche Storiche* 3 (2005): 75–95, esp. 83.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁴ Vincenzo Di Giovanni, *Del Palermo restaurato* (Palermo, 1872). The distinctions Di Giovanni gives for the aristocracy in Palermo apply, in large part, to many of the major cities of Sicily.

the sixteenth century the administration of the province of Sicily made broad use—as in Naples—of personnel from the middle class and the lesser nobility. These doctors of law turned out to be only mediocre administrators, and—much more seriously—they gave little sign of forming a social group capable of opposing the high nobility or of pursuing the interests of the crown with any real efficiency, among other reasons, because appointments to office (unlike those in Naples) were biennial, not permanent.

Thus the crown and the court of Madrid had notable problems controlling the province of Sicily, in part because the only two offices to which non-Sicilians could be named were the Conservatore del Real Patrimonio (an office established in the fifteenth century for general accounting of state income) and the Consultore del Viceré (an office created in 1535 precisely in order to reinforce the viceroy's control over the administration). Only with the pragmatic, *De reformatione tribunalium* of 6 November 1569, however, did the crown succeed in eliminating aristocrats from the institutions of the central government. In reality, that operation was limited to the formal aspects of the problem, given that as early as the mid-sixteenth century “a power block was formed between the feudal nobility and the *legali* [the legal profession] that proved long-lasting in the history of the Southern island kingdom.”⁸⁸ One problem central to the overall architecture of Sicilian governmental institutions was the absence of a council of state (on the model of the Consiglio Collaterale in Naples) capable of lending support to the viceroy in matters of politics and justice. A request to that effect advanced by the Sicilian Parliament in 1612 ushered in a new confrontation between the nobility and the crown. The two parties to the question had in mind different models for a council: the crown imagined a structure similar to the Consiglio Collaterale in Naples (that is, a body controlled by regents who would not necessarily be either Sicilian or noble, but who would be absolutely trustworthy); the Sicilian nobility envisioned a council whose members would be noble and native-born. Given these differences, reaching a compromise that might have salvaged

⁸⁸ Sciuti Russi, *Astrea in Sicilia*, 76. On the relationship between the nobility and the central government, see H. G. Koenigsberger, *The Practice of Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). On the evolution of that relationship in the seventeenth century in the context of the emergence on the political scene of the figure of the *valido*, see Francesco Benigno, *L'ombra del re: Ministri e lotta politica nella Spagna del Seicento* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992).

the project proved extremely difficult, and although the petition was formally approved on 16 October 1616, it was never put into effect,⁸⁹ thus forcing the nobility to operate outside of governmental institutions—something that its members managed to do without too much difficulty.

Maintaining Stability Under One Monarchy

Many of the studies cited in these pages interpret events in Spanish Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in terms of a search for a formula for political stability in which what mattered to contemporaries was not so much the loss of sovereignty and political autonomy, as an absence of strife and internal dissent. A century later, the memory of the conflicts that had torn apart republics and principalities in late fifteenth-century Italy was still strong, and in Spain's Italian provinces such thoughts alimented a current of prudent appeal to the example of Tacitus. One Neapolitan, Fabio Frezza, stated in 1614: “When a republic has long been agitated by civil discords, the weary citizens do not hesitate to put themselves under the dominion of one alone who will govern them”⁹⁰ Frezza's words found an echo a few years later in Giulio Cesare Capaccio, who stated, “Single governance is a happy operation, because of all species of governments Monarchy is the most desirable.” Capaccio hastened to add, however, that the monarchy he has in mind is “true royal Monarchy, constituted according to our custom. It is this that I esteem in a King, because [he is] Unus Rex, as in an absolute and free prince, as also in a Republic (not a paradox) in which all the best, with will alone, make one Dominion, which is the reason why in the best Republic two fig-peckers are not wanted in one tree—that is, that the Nobility and the people [both] govern.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ For a reconstruction of these events, see Sciuti Russi, *Astrea in Sicilia*, 128–36.

⁹⁰ “Quando una repubblica è stata a lungo agitata da civili discordie, i cittadini stanchi non recusano di mettersi sotto il dominio d'uno solo che li governi”: Fabio Frezza, *Massime, regole, precetti di Stato e di guerra, cavati da i libri de gli annali dell'istoria e dalla vita di Giulio Agricola di Cornelio Tacito . . .* (Venice, 1614). On the development of *tacitismo* in Italy and on the most recent bibliography on the question, see *Tacito e tacitismi in Italia da Machiavelli a Vico*, ed. Silvio Suppa, Quaderni dell'Archivio della Ragion di Stato, 3 (Naples: Archivio della Ragion di Stato, 2003).

⁹¹ “Felice negozio il governo solo, ché perciò tra tutte le specie de i governi la Monarchia è più desiderabile”; “La vera Monarchia regia costituita secondo il nostro

The choice that many groups in the governing classes in Italy—and not only in Spanish Italy—made to bind themselves to the Spanish crown also arose from a recognition that a monarchy that seemed highly successful and seemed to display a capacity for expansion was a better guarantee of their own existence. More than empire—the perspective of the Holy Roman Empire, as interpreted by Charles V and Gattinara—the Spanish monarchy was the model that seemed to promise the Italian elites a place for themselves as a group and to offer social and political space to each individual.⁹² In the choice between a republic and a monarchy that permeated the Italian political scene in the Cinquecento and occupied much of the theoretical reflection of the time,⁹³ the Spanish example (or, the contrast between the Kingdom of Castile and the other Spanish kingdoms) forcefully determined the orientation of the governing classes on the Italian Peninsula. For many and different reasons, the various segments of aristocratic society that made up the greater part of those governing elites—in Spanish Italy and in the republics and principalities that managed to maintain their independence—found their place in a model of political relations, even though that model reduced their contractual power in comparison to that of other groups, such as the *togati* and officials well established in governmental posts.⁹⁴ In ways similar to what was happening in the sphere of economics in the early modern age with the appearance of what has been called “the international republic of money”⁹⁵—another

costume. È questa così stimo in un Re, perché Unus Rex, come in un assoluto principe e libero, come anco in una Repubblica (non sia paradosso) over tutti gli ottimati con sola volontà fanno un solo Dominio, che per ciò nell’ottima Repubblica non vogliono in un arbore due beccafichi, cioè, che la Nobiltà, e il popolo governi . . .”: Giulio Cesare Capaccio, *Il Principe* (Venice, 1620), 181.

⁹² Angelantonio Spanoletti, *Le dinastie italiane nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 111.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 90–118. On republican and princely models, see Elena Fasano Guarini, “La crisi del modello repubblicano: Patriziati e oligarchie,” in *La Storia: I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all’età contemporanea*, ed. Massimo Firpo and Nicola Tranfaglia, 10 vols. (Turin: UTET, 1986–88), vol. 3 (1987), pt. 1, pp. 553–84; H. G. Koenigsberger, “Republicanism, Monarchism and Liberty,” in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, ed. Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs, and H. M. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43–74.

⁹⁴ Raffaele Ajello has insisted in a number of studies on the presence of a *modello togato* that presented an alternative to the aristocratic model, in Naples in particular: see, in particular, Ajello, *Una società anomala*.

⁹⁵ Aldo De Maddalena and Hermann Kellenbenz, eds., *La Repubblica internazionale del denaro tra XV e XVII secolo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986).

arena of tensions and conflicts—something like an “Internationale of political and military men and administrators” in the service of Spain and its variegated and heterogenous empire emerged in the realm of politics.⁹⁶ It is hardly surprising that in the sixteenth century groups of individuals of various social extractions (groups that were not large numerically, but were made up of men of a fairly high cultural level) chose to serve the crown—or, if another term is preferred, the public powers. The social universe of the early modern age did not offer many other possibilities (outside of an ecclesiastical career) in which to invest one’s social identity and professional resources. This made the sovereigns the only source of legitimation capable of adding value to one’s identity. In today’s society individuals can find better ways to enhance their professionalism and expend their resources in the political market through organizations, voluntary associations of individuals that project and pursue a strategy of placing their members in institutions and exerting pressure on the political power. In societies of the early modern age the forms that an organization could take were much more limited, and were in fact circumscribed by the individual’s economic sphere and work (as with the crafts and trades guilds). In some instances the academies played a role in bringing people together, and under the guise of providing literary sociability, they often served as a channel of political communication. Precisely for that reason the sovereigns regarded them with suspicion and, in some instances, openly opposed them.⁹⁷ Political institutions seem not to have been burdened with the formalization and self-referential legitimacy that weighs them down today; in the Cinquecento they had to struggle to combat other powers that sought to coopt their resources and jurisdiction. Naturally, one might hold that in societies of the early modern age the very category of “institution” had an extremely limited range of applicability. Even in a very

⁹⁶ Maurice Aymard, “Une famille de l’aristocratie sicilienne aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles: Les ducs de Terranova,” *Revue Historique* 501 (1972): 29–66.

⁹⁷ One exemplary case is Naples, where in 1547 the viceroy, Pedro de Toledo, was successful in his opposition to the three academies (the Accademia degli Ardentì, the Accademia dei Sereni, and the Accademia degli Incogniti) in which the nobility met: see Benedetto Croce, *Aneddoti di varia letteratura*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1953), 1:247–52, a work first published in 1919. There is persuasive evidence that the activities of these academies continued in the years following, although not in public form and with discussion limited to debates of a literary nature: see Tobia R. Toscano, *Letterati, corti, accademie: La letteratura a Napoli nella prima metà del Cinquecento* (Naples: Loffredo, 2000), 236–44.

reductive definition, institutions nonetheless defined a trajectory and fixed a minimum of rules under which political actors accepted to circumscribe their behavior.

Still, it is difficult to imagine that the institutional models that emerged, both at the center of the Spanish imperial system and in its peripheral kingdoms during the course of the sixteenth century, responded to any precise program. To the contrary, many such models had a brief or tormented life, and the viceroys and the governors made use of a healthy pragmatism and a high degree of flexibility in the practice of government as they managed its mechanisms and administrative procedures. The extreme variety of the contexts and the relationships we encounter in Spain's Italian provinces has led some scholars to turn away from an exclusively institutionalist approach in favor of an analysis of the formal mechanisms that regulated the processes of political decision making. One scholar has stated, speaking of Spanish Italy in the years from Charles V and Philip II, "Governance was articulated around a closed circle, a Hispano-Italian elite which cohered around the enjoyment of royal favor. This guaranteed peace and tranquility in the Italian domain, thus assuring the loyalty of the local elites by allowing them to participate in the distribution of favors and *beneficios* coming from the monarch, uniting the group through a mutual exchange of favors and influence."⁹⁸ The ability to accede to *la grazia reale*, and, through its administration, to make use of the mechanisms for the distribution of patronage by giving out "favors and benefits" was certainly a strong encouragement to the consolidation of a governing elite. The route providing access to the extraordinary resource of "royal grace" was the court. For some decades now, many studies have stressed the importance of the court, presenting it as the category most central to investigation of ancien régime societies in general, including the system of the Italian regional states.⁹⁹ This has been seen as true of

⁹⁸ "El gobierno se vertebraba en torno a un círculo cerrado, una élite hispano-italiana que se cohesionaba en torno al disfrute de la gracia real; a través de ésta se garantizaba la paz y la quietud de los dominios italianos, asegurando la lealtad de las élites locales al hacerlas partícipes de la distribución de favores y beneficios que emanaban del monarca, de modo que el grupo se articulaba mediante un mutuo intercambio de favores e influencias": Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, *Felipe II y el gobierno de Italia* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999), 35.

⁹⁹ See, A. G. Dickens, ed., *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400–1800* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977); Cesare Mozzarelli and Giuseppe

Spanish Italy as well: "Beginning with the sovereign and through the court, relations based on patronage and clientelism were established like a capillary network covering the monarchy in aggregate, so that power was not articulated by means of judicial or normative relations; it circulated through obligations established between individuals, distributing itself through a complex tangle of connections and loyalties between patrons and clients, with the monarch at the apex."¹⁰⁰

The ability of patronage and clientage networks to mobilize their members is an indisputable fact, and we can see them in operation throughout the modern era. Still, it seems difficult to imagine that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity—fundamental categories of the political lexicon of the sixteenth century and the base for much of the stability and the credibility of the political system—could pass exclusively through this sort of court privilege and operate by means of royal "grace" alone. The stability of a political system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries depended on the capacity of those who managed that system to find positive solutions to three orders of problems:

a) Administering the material resources of a given territory, which meant assuring the conditions for the production of wealth and the defense of property rights; finding broad and efficacious measures for supervising the transmission of family patrimonies; guaranteeing

Olmi, eds., *La corte nella cultura e nella storiografia* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1983); Sergio Bertelli, Franco Cardini, and Elvira Garbero Zorzi, eds., *The Courts of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Facts on File, 1986); J. H. Elliott, *Spain and Its World, 1500–1700: Selected Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, eds., *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); José Martínez Millán, ed., *La corte de Felipe II* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1994); Maurice Aymard and Marzio A. Romani, *La cour comme institution économique* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998). For a critique of the use of the concept of "court" in Italian historiography, see Trevor Dean, "The Courts," in *The Origin of the State in Italy, 1300–1600*, ed. Julius Kirshner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 136–151.

¹⁰⁰ "Partiendo del soberano y a través de la Corte, las relaciones de patronazgo y clientela se establecían como una red capilarizada sobre el conjunto de la Monarquía, de modo que el poder no se articulaba sobre relaciones jurídicas o normativas, circulaba a través de obligaciones establecidas entre individuos, distribuyéndose a través de una compleja maraña de vínculos y lealtades, entre patronos y clientes, en cuya cúspide estaba el monarca": Rivero Rodríguez, *Felipe II y el gobierno di Italia*, 216–17. A similar interpretation can be found in Angelantonio Spagnoletti, *Principi italiani e Spagna nell'età barocca* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996).

(within the limits of the possible) a distribution of wealth that was differentiated but socially acceptable; providing for fiscal revenues that were sizable but allowed ample exemptions and privileges; and assuring the provisioning of urban markets and regulating price fluctuations;

b) Guaranteeing tutelage of questions of identity that the community considered a part of its collective patrimony in such matters as the maintenance of constitutional regulations (the *capitoli* of the kingdom, *fueros*, and pacts), guaranteeing recognition of a social order founded on class differences; observance of local customary law; defense of religious faith (which implied both a recognition of the religious nature of the monarchic power and its readiness to operate against religious heterodoxy as the armed hand of the Church); and tutelage of sacred space in the cities;

c) Affronting (more or less efficaciously) emergencies arising from such variables out of the system's control as food shortages arising from an imbalance between population and resources, insurgencies, epidemics, and disturbances caused by internal enemies.

Naturally, problems of the third order could neither be foreseen nor prevented, and the lasting power of the political system lay much more in its ability to control the situation after such emergencies. The other two orders of problems, to the contrary, were more directly dependent on measures taken by the governments and on the efficacy of the solutions they adopted. It seems difficult to prove that either the court in Madrid or reliance on patronage from the sovereign had a determinant role in resolving these first two sorts of problem. Such problems involved the use of collective resources (wealth, fiscal revenues, the price of goods, juridical norms) that pertained not to individuals but to the entire community as reflected in its various social levels. The modalities for appropriating or administering such resources could be modified only by negotiation among the social groups involved, thus involving compromise and a new equilibrium among the different demands. If all of that could not be accomplished through negotiation—that is, if one party to the discussion opted for radical or unilateral change—rupture would ensue, bringing unforeseen consequences. Admittedly, the negotiators were single individuals, but above all they were representatives of social bodies to which they responded for their acts. The crown might intervene in a case of a stalemate, hurrying events along, using its authority to force a decision in a situation that had dragged on too long, or

opting to favor one of the parties. It might even do so against the opinions of a majority of its counselors because it was endowed with superior powers and able to judge not only by a “commutative justice” that “consists wholly in equality” and that “is the proper of the legal experts and judges,” but also—and above all—by means of “distributive justice, which consists wholly in inequality but [is] proportionate, and which belongs only to the prince.”¹⁰¹ The sovereign, and the viceroys and the governors who represented him, were expected to make only measured use of this second form of justice, and it seems clear that over time recourse to distributive justice was used with extreme prudence. As one Sicilian regent, Pietro Corsetto, stated, “Justice must be carried out according to the kingdom's legal principles and established practices.”¹⁰² This was true not only in Sicily.

I have sought in these pages to describe the internal stratification of the nobility of Spanish Italy and establish a relationship between that privileged elite and the territory over which it sought to gain control. There were of course many other actors and elements in this political game: the Church, the court in Madrid, non-aristocratic society, the world of the common people, informal regulatory systems, the republics and principalities of the Italian Peninsula, and even the other European powers, which attentively observed the evolution of the political situation in Italy. May these remarks serve as a basis for understanding how the aristocratic world succeeded in maintaining its own political space, while also defending the central importance of its system of values within Italian society.

¹⁰¹ “Giustizia commutativa”; “consiste tutta nella ugualità”; “è propria dei legisti et di giudici”; “giustizia distributiva che consiste tutta nella inegualità ma proportionata”: Mario Galeota, *Delle fortificazioni*, BNN, Ms. XII. D. 21. The Aristotelian reference to this dual form of justice is common to many sixteenth-century authors, however.

¹⁰² “La justicia . . . se debe hacer con sus términos juridicos y estylo del Reyno”: Pietro Corsetto, “Instruccion,” quoted in Sciuti Russi, *Il governo della Sicilia*, 66.