

Summary

«Meridiana» is a new review in history and social studies. Its main area of investigation lies in the «Mezzogiorno» (Southern Italy). The group of scholars and experts who gave it birth have the following traits in common:

- a) an interest in researching the history of the «Mezzogiorno» in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the present day socio-economic reality;
- b) a critical attitude towards some common places about «meridionalismo». In particular, it refuses to consider the regional problems of development in the southern Italy only in terms of contrast with the north of the country;
- c) within the group itself, an internal composition which includes a strong nucleus of historians together with a large number of economists, anthropologists, sociologists and local experts;
- d) the will to include research on the «Mezzogiorno» within that larger area of discussion dealing with the past and current history of present-day societies. The stress is on the importance of space and place in interpretations of development, and on the peculiar significance of core-peripheral relations.

The first part of each number of «Meridiana» deals with a monographic topic; in this number, it is concerned with the theme of markets in modern history of Southern Italy.

Piero Bevilacqua

The «Mezzogiorno» in the international market (18th-20th century).

Between the 18th and 19th century, the South of Italy witnesses a change in its collocation within the spheres of influence in the international market. Its ancient dependence on a consolidated world-economy, the one dominated by the northern Italian cities, shifts to the new power centres in the north European States. During the whole period the southern regions progressively lose their limited manufacturing characteristics (silk, linen, etc.) in favour of a more marked specialization in the agricultural sector. Significantly, olive oil constitutes the most important product and it is with olive oil that southern economy participates in the European industrial revolution. Later on, however, it is the typical mediterranean cultures (wine, citrus, almond) which ensure participation in the international market in a world scene dominated by an ever growing aggressive competition.

Biagio Salvemini

Trade circuits in «Terra di Bari» in 19th century.

The article examines the 19th century transformations in trade exchanges in a southern province traditionally open to the international market, Terra di Bari. The autonomy of the diverse circuits in which trade was organised tend to break under external pressure and both merchants and goods begin to reorganise in new exchange levels going from retail trade to high finance. The process is neither homogeneous nor equitably distributed throughout the territory. On the contrary, mercantile «modernization» and territory differentiation appear to intertwine. In the new emerging equilibrium, Bari's impetuous ascent to become an important mercantile city and the casting aside of vast contiguous areas are two faces of the same coin.

Salvatore Lupo

Between local community and long distance trade: the story of sicilian citrus culture.

The story of citrus culture is conditioned by its very early tie with the international market towards which citrus fruit trade was directed since it began, at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. During the early stages, foreign merchants controlled the traffic of trade, but later on (end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th) the local élites tried to gain control of the flow of wealth in order to confirm their leading role in Sicilian society during a period of great transformation.

Marcello Gorgoni

Food and agriculture production (1945-85).

The food and agriculture economy of the South has been for a long time more or less intimately connected with other economies and other countries. The period which begins with the end of the 2nd World War is marked by an increasing emphasis on such contacts.

The interaction between agriculture and the rest of the economy increases and becomes more complex while the economy of the «Mezzogiorno» becomes more deeply tied to international and national economic circuits. From the 50s onwards food production and consumption increases and so does exchange with the rest of the country and the world. Though the dynamics of agricultural production may appear to be on the whole favourable, its particular composition in terms of products, as well as the scarce development in food and agricultural industry, constitute a handicap for similarly favourable dynamics in the commercial flow from the «Mezzogiorno» to the rest of the country and abroad. The same factors contribute to a great extent to determine an increasing import flow from the rest of the country and from abroad.

Sergio Bruni and Domenico Cersosimo

Beyond agriculture; manufacturing production and trade in the last forty years.

The paper examines the market range of southern manufacturing production from the 50s onwards. During the 50s, Italian economy was progressively integrating with the international exchange market and the South became definitely part of the national market.

The increase in demand deriving from a policy of extraordinary intervention (net currency transfers and external industrial investments) did not favour the growth of southern enterprises which suffered a quantitative reduction due to competition from the more efficient centre-north enterprises.

In the 70s, widespread industrialisation and self-propulsive development of the centre-northern and eastern regions, built around a myriad of small export companies, did not seem to affect the South. In fact, the marginal micro-enterprises in the South continued to direct their production towards the limited local markets. Only some autochthonous enterprises and big production plants connected with private and public enterprise managed to capture some new national and international markets.

Augusto Placanica

The City, the Past, the Landscape: foreign travellers and Southern history.

Between the 18th and 19th centuries the «grand tour» fashion brought to Italy many illustrious pens, travellers from different parts of Europe who came to test an idea of the «Mezzogiorno» which had already consolidated in their own culture: that of ancient splendour contrasted by the present poverty. The place chosen by the sun and the sea left to languish because of the incapacity and apathy of the current inhabitants.

Placanica claims, however, that the travellers' descriptions are not all pre-conceived. It is hardly possible to consider them the result of direct observation, rather they have, above all, been filtered by local mediators – noble or bourgeois – who acted as hosts or translators during the traveller's tour. From this particular angle, the travelling journals and reports acquire a different value and are considered as yet another «source» for the history of the «Mezzogiorno» and for the image that the local élites transmitted of themselves.

Raimondo Catanzaro, Gabriella Gribaudo, Salvatore Lupo
and Paolo Pezzino

Anton Blok: the «mafia» between anthropology and history.

Mafia in a Sicilian Village, by the Dutch anthropologist Anton Blok, only recently in Italian translation, provides the grounds for a multi-faceted discussion on mafia, power, local society, political circuits, state intervention, behaviour rules and reference values in contemporary Sicilian history. The point of view of the historian, the anthropologist and the sociologist meet and clash on these inter-

pretative key elements, the same ones which have made Blok's book a classic of so-called «mediterranean anthropology».

Augusto Graziani
The «Mezzogiorno» nowadays.

What is the present state of southern economy? Has the gap between the south and the north of Europe widened? What kind of economic relationship is there between the North and the South of the «Bel Paese»? One of the most authoritative Italian economists reflects on these questions analysing the causes for the low entrepreneurial dynamism which characterises the «Mezzogiorno» nowadays. At the same time though, he emphasises the steady growth in consumer goods and the increase in the standard of living over the last few years. His final diagnosis is not at all optimistic: the main resources, human, financial and intellectual, do not appear to be oriented towards the kind of development which will effectively increase the productive framework.