

S.L. BAILEY, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise. Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 1999, pp. XXI-308.

This is another case-study that analyses migratory flows, in particular Italian emigration to the New World, using a well-defined methodology as a framework and premise to the research work. In the preface of a recent book, a collection of essays on *Italian Workers of the World. Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), the editors Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser M. Ottanelli stress the employment of the "diverging comparative method" (i.e. the study of one group in many places) which although not new is very effective. In the book the two editors present the results of a conference held at Tampa in 1996 to debate an international project which was launched in 1990 intending to compare the experience and studies carried out by researchers in diverse countries on the subject of Italian workers who had emigrated to Europe, Latin America and the U.S.A.. According to the two editors, the collective work has encouraged a highly useful debate which can only be carried on through comparisons and syntheses rather than through unilateral case-studies. "This project convinced us that national histories are comfortable but rigid 'iron cages'".

Investigations into migratory movements and their characteristics and social impact have indeed grown both in a national and international context, dealing with not only literature on the subject but also the methodology related to the collection of sources. These include the two volumes edited by the General Management of Archives (*L'emigrazione italiana 1870-1970. Atti dei colloqui di Roma, 19-20 settembre 1989; 29-31 ottobre 1990; 28-30 ottobre 1993*, Roma 2002, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato. Saggi 70) which contain contributions from Italian and foreign scholars about documentation on Italian migration kept in public and private archives as well as by different bodies and institutions. The essays are also an attempt to produce a comparative map of Italian migration to Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa and Oceania through archival records.

Returning to Bailey, history lecturer at Rutgers University (New Jersey), this kind of enquiry is not new to him and he develops it in a special introductory chapter on methodology (*The Comparative Study of Transnational Italian Migration*).

Bailey sees emigration as a global phenomenon but this simple principle is for him the arrival point of an inductive enquiry which considers case-studies as the irreplaceable pieces in a mosaic that illustrates the inter-locking relationship between the mother country and the emigration country (migratory chains) and to a certain extent, between the host countries themselves, on account of the

various migratory strategies and destinations chosen for example within the same family group.

Bailey proposes an interesting idea for analysing migration which lends even greater weight to his comparative-inductive approach: "The most important of the collective strategies was the informal personal networks the immigrants used to assist them as they negotiated the various phases of the migration process. Originally scholars referred to this strategy as *chain migration*. The metaphor... is not entirely accurate. I prefer the term network because it more effectively describes the relationships involved. *Chain* implies a sequential linear relationship between individuals, but the ties among these individuals were most frequently multidimensional... it is essential to conceptualise the personal relationships among individual immigrants in terms of multidimensional clusters".

Certainly Bailey starts with specific cases related both to places, as in the case of Agnone (a small town in Molise in the province of Campobasso, a favourite field of enquiry among experts on migration chains) and to family groups, like the Sola family from Valdengo in the province of Biella. In both these cases, Bailey merges the variety of destinations into two great poles: New York and Buenos Aires but his study overall takes into consideration the cases of San Francisco, Toronto and San Paulo. Clearly he wishes to emphasise the diversity and repetitive nature of variables in Italian migration in order to recreate the network of relationships (emigration agents, family groups and friends, associations, religion etc.) and the reactions to and on the part of host countries.

Bailey points out: "The position of the immigrant group in the social hierarchy of the host society is an intriguing but little-understood variable. From this study of five cases we see that two of the variables – competition with other groups and host society attitudes toward Italians – are linked to the Italian's position in the social hierarchy."

Bailey supports his arguments with tables of statistics, graphs, settlement maps. Above all his study is based on a wide consultation of archival sources and official publications of the three countries: Italy, Argentina and the U.S.A. In the case of Italy and Argentina, these include official documents concerning marital status, marriage records and passport records.

As he pointed out in the first of the two books edited by the General Management of Archives, the Argentinean scholar Fernando J. Devoto *Itinerario de un problema a través de las Fuentes: lo inmigrantes italianos y la sociedad argentina*, pp.145-156), the American historian ("pionero en este campo"), has already widely studied these kinds of sources. In previous works he has not only examined immigrants' marriage strategies but in particular he has traced the birth and activity of mutual help associations like the *Unione e Benevolenza di Buenos Aires* which he found in the rich Argentine archive of the Italian Association of Mutuality and Education.

As Devoto points out, Bailey is very interested in "territorial insertion", that is in the ways immigrant groups settled and fit into the host society. Nonetheless it should be observed that the detailed study of settlement and relationship patterns (in the period before the Great War which has been widely researched) is nothing new with regard to the investigations carried out by other North American researchers like Juliani which have covered the different forms of association, the role played by the Catholic Church as mediator and in integrating Italian groups into New York society, the anti-foreigner attitude of the American government and public opinion at least until the beginning of the twentieth century. More interesting are the different types of reaction of North American and Argentinean society to the immigrants and the different approach and results obtained by Italian emigrants in the two destinations from a social and economic point of view. Such differences were due to the presence or absence of common Latin roots, of a language and mentality which was more similar in the case of Argentina, not to mention the role of Catholicism and the presence of an old-established Italian community in a society with less social differentiation and a large group comprising "gente del pueblo" engaged in trade, industry and services.

This brings us back to our first point and Bailey's insistence on the validity of the methodological approach which is supported naturally by studies and comparisons of actual cases: "They must in effect write two or more historical monographs... and combine the results in a single integrated work. This will involve use of primary sources, immersion in the details of the cases, and attention to the difference among cases and the larger contextual factors that gave rise to them. In addition, it may necessitate learning a number of languages and examining archival evidence in several different countries." This is definitely a good bridge between empiricism and historical method.

Ludovica De Courten

Ministry for Artistic Heritage and Cultural Activities, Rome

F. BOF-M. PECORARI-C. NARDI SPILLER-P. DONGILI, *Il credito fondiario delle Venezie nel Novecento*, edited by G. Borelli, P. Pecorari, G. Zalin, Mediovenezie Banca, Verona, 2002, pp. VIII-430.

To place the studies contained in this book in a proper context we need firstly to focus on the complex regional situation in which the new form of credit came into being. The very serious agricultural crisis of 1880-1887 caused mainly by the massive importation of Russian and American grain and also by the fall in the cost of sea freight had, as is well known, triggered a mass migration from

the countryside. At least up until the beginning of the twentieth century, when overseas emigration largely from the South of Italy became predominant, the central-northern parts of the country and the Veneto in particular generated the largest migratory flow towards countries in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. A clear sign of the hardships and suffering caused by the cereal crisis was the big increase in mortgage debts and the expropriation of properties due to insolvency, with the Veneto holding the primacy in this respect, over Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy, a situation which had an adverse affect on investments for land improvement and reclamation.

It was precisely in the Veneto, where an old tradition of agriculture and manufacturing – mainly in textiles – had produced a protoindustrial base for the region's future economic development, that a new savings organisation emerged in the 1880s, that of the agricultural banks. This had been introduced into the region for the first time in Loreggio in the province of Padua in 1883 by Leone Wollemborg. The economist from the Veneto and future finance minister, embracing the liberal pro-association spirit of the times, had promoted alongside Luigi Luzzatti a solution to the agrarian credit problem based on German-type co-operative institutions. The agrarian credit co-operatives, or agricultural banks, which were initially in the form of mutual help societies, had in fact spread in Germany around forty years earlier, in Rhenish Prussia through the action of the Burgomaster Friedrich Wilhlem Raiffeisen (1818-1888), theorist and organiser of the co-operative movement. The *Raiffeisenvereine*, which are still operating, had been seen by their founder as an instrument for morally elevating society through their welfare and community function.

It is no accident, therefore, that it was in northern Italy (Veneto, Lombardy and some parts of Emilia) where the local clergy were very active in promoting association for economic and social purposes, where Catholic agricultural banks established themselves according to the new social doctrine of the Church of the *Rerum Novarum* and the *Opera dei congressi*, which were anxious to rescue the peasantry from speculation and usury. It was the cleric Don Luigi Cerutti who founded numerous agricultural banks in the Veneto in the period after 1890, inspired by the Catholic fundamentalist spirit to save peasants from "wretchedness and socialism", starting with the one in Gambarare, in the province of Venice. From 1894 and 1897 there were more than seven hundred Catholic agricultural banks, without counting the large number of co-operative organisations and the creation of the first Catholic banks.

This is the background to the book which has just appeared in the anniversary year (April 1902) of the issue of the first land certificates by the *Cassa civica di risparmio di Verona*. The latter had been authorised by a royal decree of 15 April 1900 to grant land credit in the provinces of Belluno, Padua, Rovigo, Treviso, Udine, Venice, Verona, Vicenza and Mantua and had set up an office

for this purpose which in 1919 was to give rise to the *Istituto di credito fondiario delle Venezie* with the participation of the *Istituto Federale di credito per il risorgimento delle Venezie* and the savings banks of the Triveneto, that is, of the territories tied to the Veneto's economic "culture". The subject has been widely studied by one of the editors of the book (F. Bof, *Il credito fondiario della Cassa civica di risparmio di Verona, 1902-1919*).

This means that the studies collected here and already pre-announced by Zalin in his paper (*Il progresso economico e sociale del Veneto tra l'annessione ed il secondo dopoguerra*) to the conference in 2000 "Mediovenezie tra passato e futuro", intend to stress the lay and liberal influence on this new credit activity, examining its development and history up to the 1990s.

Maurizio Pegrari's essay (*L'Istituto di credito fondiario delle Venezie tra primo e secondo conflitto mondiale*) linking up with the works by Silvio Lanaro and Giorgio Roverato, provides a concise and balanced interpretation of the "Venetian model" of economic and industrial development based on small and medium-sized enterprise, which did not represent a clean break with the past. In fact "Catholicism and the paternalism of the managerial and agrarian ruling class... were to become the foundations of society in the Veneto at least until the end of the second world war and the premise for the construction of the "Veneto model" which was considered to be the exemplification of strong regional peculiarity." Such a model was tied to the traditional work values of the population, the propensity to undertake risk in enterprise, the manufacturing system based on small-sized individual or family-run industry, the accumulation of technological know-how, an old established entrepreneurial spirit which was later to give rise to industrial development (textiles and chemicals) that was anomalous compared to the more typical development of the heavy iron and steel and engineering industry.

On the eve of the first world war, the Veneto was third in the league table of industrialised regions after Lombardy and Piedmont but with a predominance of enterprises and work force employed in the processing of agricultural products. This brings us to the book's basic theme, land credit, as Pegrari remarks: "The land is thus not only a resource for what is produced and can be processed, but also a value that can be changed in to money. It always has been of course. Nonetheless, the creation of land credit... marks an attempt to foster greater entrepreneurial dynamism among big and small landowners alike and at the same time to convert the land into financial resources for economic development." As Nardi Spiller (*L'organizzazione dell'Istituto dalla ricostruzione nazionale al miracolo economico*) writes, once the bank crisis of the 1920s and the Fascist regime were over, in the aftermath of the second world war "the business of the land credit institutions recovered its vigour and impetus, which was of vital importance for promoting local growth and also fundamental for

contributing in concrete terms to national growth, through the granting of land, building and agricultural credit."

In fact, the Fascist government, against the movement for more local power (considering the new provinces too) and suspicious of Catholic credit, had for reasons firstly of general policy and subsequently because of the emergency created by the war, applied the line set out in 1933 by IRI's general manager at that time, Menichella: "savings in the next few years will have to be mostly employed to cover government needs".

After the upswing following the boom and also following the crisis at the turn of the 1970s, *Credito fondiario delle Venezie* seems instead to maintain a policy of continuity with its origins, combining this with a flexibility that enables it to examine alternative ways and new fields of activity, with a readiness to support public works on the one hand and a commitment on the other hand to support tourism and small-scale enterprise in the face of a decline in the number of farmers and small artisans. Based on extensive documentation drawn from the archives of the credit institutions under study, the book ends with the essay by P. Dongili (*L'istituto di credito fondiario delle Venezie dal 1963 al 1992*) which rightly shows that *Credito fondiario delle Venezia's* new charter in 1992, followed by banking reform, especially the reform of land credit, legitimised the creation of a joint-stock company and protected the rights of company minorities in the "prospective mission of a financial operator destined to develop in the operative areas of participating bodies as producer and distributor of products and services."

Ludovica De Courten

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E Brix-K. Koch-E. Vylonzil (eds.), *The Decline of Empires*, Verlag für Geschichte und Politik Wien, Oldenbourg-München, 2001, pp. 192.

With an almost identical title¹ C.M. Cipolla published, more than thirty years ago, a book containing contributions from many authors. However, between Cipolla's book and that under review the differences are considerable. Cipolla was addressing economic decline and analysed the parabola of the main empires and countries which throughout history had seen their economy and their influence fade irreparably. Cipolla examined the causes of the decline of the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire, the eclipse of the Arab world, of Italy and the Chinese Empire. He drew from the analyses of all these cases taken

¹ C.M. Cipolla, *The Economic Decline of Empires*, (Methuen, London 1970), pp.VII-280

together the conclusion that there could be no such thing as an indestructible empire and that when the process of disintegration begins all, or nearly all, the Empire's ruling class reveal their incapacity to perceive the inadequacy of their own actions, rules and institutions in the face of a new situation. Awareness of decline is usually only registered after the process has reached a conclusion. And Cipolla points out that G.B. Vico created his theory of historical cycles after Italian decline was a *fait accompli* in the seventeenth century and that Britain's decline found its theoretician only in the twentieth century.

If the book edited by Cipolla aimed to investigate the reasons why empires declined and the "laws" or "mechanisms" that regulated such processes of life and death, this book limits its objectives to analyzing the final phases of three European empires: the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Russian Empire, adding by way of comparison an analysis of the collapse of the British Empire and of the Soviet Union. In other words, unlike Cipolla's work, which spans from the Roman Empire to the eighteenth century, this book concentrates on the nineteenth and twentieth century and on Europe.

The book brings together the proceedings of an international conference held in London in 1998 to identify the forces which cause empires to disintegrate. There are thirteen essays, most of them adopting a comparative approach. Apart from a comparison between the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires, comparisons are drawn between the Czarist and Soviet Empire, and between the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at the time of the first world war and the British Empire at the time of the second world war. The work also examines the role of Chamberlain and Churchill in the dissolution of the British Empire, the changes in Russia, past and present, and its prospects, the experiences of certain countries after the break up of the British Empire, like India and Ireland, as well as those of countries following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

In these essays the analysis of economic factors is never neglected and their importance is not denied, although overall it seems that the authors are convinced that a combination of different factors are at play in the decline of empires, the cultural factor being the driving force both in the rise of an empire and its fall. To use the words of one of the book's editors, E. Brix, empires are heterogeneous entities held together by an elite group. Such entities are less sensitive to political and economic factors and much more sensitive to the belief in the cultural superiority of the dominant elite group. Therefore when this superiority is questioned the unity of the empire enters into a crisis and sooner or later the empire dissolves. According to Brix, this is what happened to the empires of continental Europe and the colonial empires. The case of the Ottoman Empire was exemplary. The cultural model of the Young Turks was responsible for setting in train the elements of disintegration and for putting the empire on its path to decline. And indeed, certain factors – the principle of ethnicity, nationality,

legitimacy, power and cultural imperialism - which played an important role in the dissolution of supranational powers in the nineteenth century have continued to play a leading role in the twentieth century. This is borne out by the fact that most of the states that came into being after the 1989 revolutions were founded on the principles of legitimacy and ethnicity.

In the book there are also some reflections on the European Union, considered no more and no less than an empire which came into being through the actions of an elite group who began an emotive and intellectual movement, with the conclusion that "the history of empires does not teach us whether the European project will move towards the American solution (consolidation) or towards the Ottoman solution (disintegration)".

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L. DE ROSA, *Conflitti e squilibri nel Mezzogiorno tra Cinque e Ottocento*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1999, p.209.

The book is divided into ten chapters and spans South Italy's economic history over three centuries: from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. Some of the essays contained in the book have already been published, other essays which have also been published have been thoroughly revised using more recent literature and new material, while some are totally new works. The first two essays deal with the sixteenth century but most of them concern the economic aspects of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Only one essay, the last one, addresses a problem related to the first half of the nineteenth century. Regarding subject matter, the essays deal with agriculture, industry, infrastructure, guilds, public finance and health. Two crises are examined in detail: the crisis that shook the Kingdom in the last years of Philip II's Empire and the crisis that broke out towards the end of the eighteenth century. Both of them led to insurrections and attempts at insurrection: the first with the Tommaso Campanella conspiracy and the second with the setting up of the Neapolitan Republic in 1799. The two crises had different causes. The Campanella conspiracy arose out of a combination of social and economic circumstances which worsened from year to year but which finally broke out in the last few years of Philip II's reign. It was fomented by a succession of agricultural crises and was accentuated by the growing tax burden imposed on the Neapolitan Kingdom by Madrid which was engaged in war on two fronts. Matters were made worse by the continual currency exchange speculations and the progressive decline of economic activity. In some respects the other crisis also had economic origins, such as the

deterioration in public finance, the gradual disappearance of metal money and its substitution by paper money which resulted in the devaluation of the latter, and the decline in many sectors of production. Led by the country's educated classes, both aristocratic and non-aristocratic, the Revolution was inspired by the thinking and teachings of the Enlightenment which was particularly influential in the second half of the century through the works of Genovesi and Filangieri and others. It was also influenced by the revolutionary events in France and by the presence of a French army in Rome, which the Neapolitan revolutionaries looked to, in vain, for support and encouragement.

The ten chapters provide an interesting and mostly new insight into the history of South Italy. The chapter on Philip II draws masterly on a rich and highly selected documentation and gives an exhaustive and stimulating analysis of one of the most complex and lesser known periods in South Italy's economic history. The final chapter on the Southern Kingdom's institutional changes and economic development and its infrastructure is no less penetrating, and is backed up and elucidated in the chapter on the central and peripheral organisation of the health service.

To conclude, the book is written in a clear and accessible way which is easy to understand even when dealing with currency problems. It is a very useful contribution to our understanding of Italy's economic and social history in early modern times. One only wonders why after so many studies on South Italy in the Spanish period, the author has not yet produced a general history of the period. As the book shows, there is no aspect of South Italy's economy in which De Rosa does not demonstrate his mastery of the sources and methodology.

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J. GLENE, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500-1660*. Routledge, London, 2002, pp 277.

The origins and development of the so called Modern State is one of the most important topics of history and social sciences. In the first decades of the last century, the famous German sociologist Max Weber formulated an influential theory in which the birth of the modern state in the early modern period was considered the result of the tendency towards rationalising of nascent western capitalism. Weber saw in the growth of bureaucracy one of the best signs of this, and thought that one of the main functions of the new states was to exercise the monopoly of violence. There were, of course, many other theories. The Marxist

historians, for example, linked the beginning of the modern state to the need to put an end to the distributive conflicts which had marked European history in the late medieval period. In turn, in the last decades of the twentieth century other distinguished scholars, such as G. Parker, have stressed the relationship between the modern state and the military revolution.

In "War and the State" Jan Glete tries to offer a new model for the explanation of this basic problem of European and world history. As he writes in the second chapter, the expansion of the fiscal state rested on several basic factors. First, it was necessary to reach a compromise between the objectives of the rulers and those of the society; what he calls the question of "political interest aggregation". This is explained by Glete in terms of a simple supply and demand model. On the demand side, European societies felt the need for protection and safety from external and internal dangers and threats. On the supply side, the kings and rulers were well placed to offer this kind of service. Of course, all depended on the existence of an agreement between the two sides. If this were the case, the government would enjoy the best environment for enlarging its complex bureaucratic organizations and for extracting from society the fiscal and human resources needed to fund them. Needless to say, if the opposite happened, state development might be halted and serious political problems might arise.

Second, Glete emphasizes the role played by organization and bureaucracy in the whole process, linking it to the changes brought about by the military revolution. The advances in military and naval technologies created a window of opportunity for the growth of new professional armies and for the expansion of a bureaucracy which collected the taxes to pay these armies and to provide them with logistical support. As this was expensive, the kings were better placed than the feudal lords to fund these services. In this context, Glete stresses one important aspect which is usually forgotten. Using a set of concepts obtained from today's organization theory, he describes the early modern period governments and armies as complex structures with a great propensity to growth. They could be considered as stores where the bureaucrats preserved the best administrative and technical systems of the time. These organizations had their own autonomy and their know-how could always be used for further expansion, as did frequently happen.

In chapters 3,4 and 5 Glete uses these ideas to study the Spanish, Dutch and Swedish cases.

The analysis of the Spanish experience in chapter three may be considered the nucleus of the book. In Glete's view, this case is particularly interesting. After all, the Spanish monarchy was one of the first "Fiscal-Military States", and suffered an early decline which was caused, according to Glete, by two problems. First, the expansion phase which lasted throughout the sixteenth century subtended an agreement between the crown's objectives and society's demands. However,

according to the author, this agreement would disappear in the seventeenth century. Second, in the sixteenth century the Spanish crown developed the most advanced army of the time. This army, which was tightly controlled by the crown, was characterized by a high professionalism and was simultaneously supported by an efficient navy. However, this changed dramatically in the next century. The navy suffered almost complete collapse and the army evolved from a professional force into a group of regional militias controlled by the nobility and local elites. In terms of the aforementioned organization theory, this may be described as a good reminder that we should not take for granted that complex organisations automatically tend to grow. As the history of Spanish monarchy shows, the opposite sometimes is the case.

The Dutch and Swedish experience was very different from the Spanish situation. In the seventeenth century, both countries set up fiscal states, and there are good reasons which explain their success. The two countries both agreed on the importance of building well organized bureaucracies and powerful armies. In the Dutch Republic this was due, first, to the need to guarantee the country's independence against the Habsburg dynasty and afterwards to the desire to protect Dutch commercial interests scattered all over the world. Sweden, on the other hand, wanted to put an end to the political problems of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which were marked by frequent political unrest and external wars against Denmark, something well exploited by the Vasa dynasty. Unlike the Spanish situation, once the Dutch Republic and Sweden had set up their fiscal states, the potential for growth of complex organizations fully developed, and this facilitated the further expansion of their bureaucracy and armed forces.

Considering the scarcity of books and articles on Dutch and, particularly, Swedish history in countries such as Italy and Spain, we believe that *War and the State* helps to fill a gap and broadens our knowledge and perspectives. Its emphasis on the supply and demand factor as a way of understanding the birth and expansion of the modern state is one of the most interesting merits of the book and enables the author to offer a clear and concise view of the Dutch and Swedish experience. We should also point out the book's emphasis on bureaucratic organizations and their tendency to expand, although we suggest that this is more a logical development of old Weberian theory than something completely new.

More questionable is, however, the author's view about the Spanish monarchy. Leaving aside some incidental points, like the use of the term "Spanish Monarchy" to name the vast conglomerate of lands and kingdoms ruled by the Habsburg crown, there is a fundamental aspect we would like to comment on. As it would be impossible to study all the territories under Habsburg government, Glete has analyzed what happened in Naples and Castile. In his explanation of

Castilian events, he portrays a view which is nearly identical to the one expressed by I.A.A Thompson in his classic book *War and Decadence*. In this book Thompson showed that the Castile's strong central government reached its maximum levels of efficiency and centralization in the second half of the sixteenth century. In the first decades of the seventeenth century a phase of decline began, when the nobility and local sectors regained the positions they had previously lost. This view was highly influential, and *War and Decadence* triggered an interesting debate in the last decades of the twentieth century. Today however the positions have changed, and there is a new and more absolutist interpretation of Castilian government. As a result of this, it is no longer possible to describe the history of the Castilian state in the seventeenth century in terms of failure and decadence. Castilian bureaucracy preserved its high levels of efficiency and, in fact, it could well be viewed as the real ruler of the country during the difficult years of Charles II's reign, guaranteeing the survival and continuity of the state and the country. Can anybody imagine better evidence of the power of Castile's fiscal state?

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R. L. KAGAN, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793*, with the collaboration of F. Marias, Yale University Press, New Haven-London, 2000, pp.X-236.

This book was originally conceived as a systematic catalogue of the visual representations of the Hispanic and Hispanic-American world before 1800, for which published iconographical documentation has been fairly limited up till now compared to other European, North American countries and China. At a time when there were no other ways for documenting the existence and structure of a town, visual representation was believed to be an invaluable historical source which made it possible to identify the changes to the urban fabric through comparison of images over different periods. Such a comparison was, for example, of great interest in the case of the towns of Spanish America, that is, between the pre-Columbian towns and those of the colonial period, and between the public views, which everyone could observe, and those commissioned for military purposes which were secret.

Those who produced these representations were not always well-known artists, even though some work was performed by artists of such calibre. Many were accurate draughtsmen who paid more attention to detail than to the overall representation. These were artists or draughtsmen who reproduced the face of

a town, sometimes without staying in it for long and thus without getting to know it very well, while others had spent long periods there or indeed their entire existence.

The difference between these two types of artists is reflected in the very concept of the city, that is, whether cities are the walls and the houses they enclose or whether the towns are the men and women who dwell there and carry on their activities there. The question is not irrelevant since, as Kagan points out, there is evidence of it as far back as the fifth century B.C. when Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* stressed that the town was made up of its inhabitants and not of its walls or buildings. This concept was taken up frequently in future centuries, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and was used by Shakespeare who in *Coriolanus* declares: "What is a citie, but the People." The city was basically synonymous with *civitas*, that is, with "a certain number of men united by social bonds", and was the opposite to *urbs*, to a walled structure, that is, and to the inhabitants. Actually the city was more than that: a territorial entity with its own characteristics, a *genius loci*, a *lieu de mémoire*, a space, that is, which the local people could understand and remember. According to Kagan, *urbs* and *civitas*, *space* and *piazza* are the heart of the problem under study.

The book distinguishes views that were illustrations of *urbs* from those that incorporated the idea of *civitas*, even though the dividing line between the two is somewhat grey. Sometimes the cartographer simply aimed to produce a faithful representation of the urban space, elsewhere he saw in it multiple aspects.

Having considered the representation of the city as a reflection of the evolution of the very idea of city, Kagan dwells on the what the city stood for towards the end of the fifteenth century, at the time of the discovery of America. He shows on the one hand the influence of the Aristotelian interpretation (place of civilised life) and at the same time that of St. Augustine's teachings (the city of God). The idea of the city that resulted was therefore that of *civitas* or *respublica christiana*; an idea that not only characterised urban philosophy in the Italian Renaissance but which spread to Spain, as we can see in the representations of Cordova, Barcelona, Avila and Toledo and those of the New World, as in the case of the representation of the city of Mexico.

In this way, as had occurred in the rest of Europe, the Spanish city and the Portuguese city took on the function of a civilising mission. In Spain the long struggle against Islam had in fact strengthened the cities' position and they became increasingly autonomous, especially in Castile, as successive governments were forced to acknowledge. As the book points out, there were around 16,000 municipal jurisdictions in the kingdom of Castile in the fifteenth century, each one theoretically independent and subject only to the crown and its ministers.

The same tendency was established in the New World too, which became an *Empire of cities*. Santo Domingo was the first city (1501) to be built. Others followed in subsequent years, among the most important being: Havana (1515) and San Juan de Puerto Rico (1521). In the first half of the sixteenth century dozens and dozens were founded, especially along the coast or near to mines and the trend continued in subsequent decades – for example Caracas (1567), Arica (1579), in the seventeenth century with the founding of Santa Fe (1610) and El Paso (1618) and even in the eighteenth century with the founding of San Antonio (1718). All these cities had their own municipal council (*cabildo*).

It was precisely the creation of the *cabildo* which turned the city into a *civitas* and not an *urbs*, since contemporary opinion declared that “without justice, government and good and just laws” no city could be created. The instructions that King Ferdinand gave to those who were to build the city of Panama reflects this intent. The cities to be built had to be orderly with a central square-shaped *piazza* on the sides of which were to be situated the government building, the Church and its building, the merchants’ building and that of the army with a prison annexed to it. The *piazza* was reached by a number of straight roads, intersected by others so as to form a grid of right angles. In particular, after 1522 and the construction of Panama, this urban lay out, which was similar to the Roman system illustrated by Vitruvius, was used regularly by the other cities which Spain built in Latin America, although it was by no means a new system since it had been adopted in Spain even before the discovery and conquest of America. Nonetheless the *piazza* was the symbol of the Hispano-American city and was the means for attracting the natives and getting them to surrender to Spanish authority and to convert.

While Spain looked to the cities in order to build up and preserve its Empire, Portugal chose another way. With the exception of Goa and Macao, the Portuguese relied on the creation of fortified commercial factories in Africa, Asia and America, rather than on the construction of cities. A chain of fortified trading centres was built, stretching from the African coast to the Japanese sea, where the residents were soldiers and not citizens. In America, however, the Portuguese followed the Spanish example and by around 1570 they had built more than 16 cities, the most important being Olinda, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador de Bahia. Unlike the Spaniards, who had also built within occupied territories, the Portuguese built only along the coast, conceiving the city as a trading post for trade with Portugal. Their main concern was trade. As a result they invested in fortifications, warehouses and quays where boats could dock rather than in large central *piazas*, churches and large public buildings, which were all features of Spanish cities. The Dutch also adopted the system of fortified commercial factories, although some of these, as in the case of Recife, built in 1637, had the appearance of small cities. In north America, over 30 years were to elapse before

they acknowledged some of these forts, like that of Brooklyn, as cities, and many more years were to elapse before other forts were turned into cities.

As far as the British are concerned, their attitude was ambiguous. Their first settlements had mainly the characteristics of plantations. Nonetheless, in the 1620s and 1630s these were gradually transformed into villages which only much later possessed the autonomy and features of cities.

Except for a brief reference to the cities of medieval France, the book does not dwell on French settlements in north America. However, what is mentioned should be sufficient to highlight the originality which characterised Spanish settlements compared to the other countries which had relations with the various continents.

The book will be of interest to historians of the single areas under study and certainly to historians of urban planning, art historians, historians of geography and cartography. Striking a good balance between written text and iconography, overall the book provides a stimulating reconstruction of a fascinating chapter in human history and deserves praise for its originality and scholarly content, as well as for the beauty and elegance of its typographical reproductions, an index of which might have been useful.

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M. MERIGGI – A. PASTORE (eds.), *Le regole dei mestieri e delle professioni, secoli XV-XIX*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2000, pp. 378.

This is a collection of papers delivered in September 1998 at the seminar on “Le regole dei mestieri e delle professioni” organised by the Certosa di Pontignano (Siena). The seminar was one of many dealing with a subject that continues to stimulate research and reflection among historians since it not only involves aspects more directly related to the history of monopolies and the management of economic activity but also, on the one hand, studying the underlying juridical instruments and on the other examining the participation of guilds and professional associations in the political system.

Edited by two experts on the subject, especially Pastore, a historian of modern professions, the book's interest lies mainly in the fact that the essays cover various Italian regions and have a time span which reaches the end of the nineteenth century (as is the case of a previous book which came out in 1999, *Corporazioni e gruppi professionali nell'Italia moderna*, edited by A. Guenzi-P. Massa-A. Moioli.)

Perhaps therefore it makes sense to start backwards and to set out the

conclusions reached by S. Onger in his study (*Mestieri senza mestiere al mercato annonario di Brescia nel primo Ottocento*). Examining an urban situation undergoing change with the crisis following the transition from the old system - in which the professional category of brokers and mediators continued to work under "licence" even under the Austrians - to the liberalisation of the market, Onger focuses on two basic aspects of the changing relationship between the state and guilds: "A market with fewer rules and no longer controlled by the guilds enabled many unskilled workers to carve themselves out an occupation from which they would have otherwise been excluded". Onger adds, however: "Government rules, while overcoming the constraints to work through exclusion, were not enough to guarantee steady employment for the lowest occupations... nor to clearly define a professional identity, not to mention the reassuring feeling of belonging to a trade community".

As is well known, from the middle ages to the Renaissance, the latter had played a decisive role, and not only in the management of economic activity which involved juridical autonomy in internal disputes and the policy to elect its own bodies independent of the central authority. Nonetheless, as has been pointed out in relation to the Florentine case (F. Franceschi, "Intervento del potere centrale e ruolo delle Arti nel governo dell'economia fiorentina del Trecento e del primo Quattrocento. Linee generali", in *Archivio storico italiano*, CLI, 1993, n.558, IV, pp.863-909) that in "this context of heavily decentralised responsibility... the means to guarantee the coordination of economic initiatives lay mainly in the continual exchange ensured by the institutionalised participation of the guilds in the Republic's government". Undoubtedly, the birth of territorial states and principalities was to change the situation and to see the erasure of the guilds' autonomy and powers, with the guild's elites or oligarchies merging into the city's ruling class by the end of the fourteenth century.

To quote Franceschi once more, a political transformation had occurred which "had reduced guilds to the status of public officials, legally and constitutionally subordinated to a sovereignty of which they were no longer a substantial element." But, perhaps in another respect, they were. Actually from a strictly economic point of view the traditional trades, organised and protected with charters, rules and barriers to entry to the guilds, began to break up in the sixteenth and seventeenth century when the abolition of guilds led to the growth of cottage industry, precursor to the future industrial revolution. In any case, already in the fourteenth and fifteenth century the business trades became increasingly more differentiated from what would later become known as the "liberal" professions, including the judges and notaries which were to form the large bureaucracy and the "officials" operating the large government machinery from the Renaissance onwards.

In her contribution (*Organizzazioni di mestiere, corpi professionali e*

istituzioni sulla fine del medioevo nell'Italia centro settentrionale) D. Degrassi writes: "From the end of the fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth century the *collegia*, which grouped together all those who performed professional rather than productive activity – doctors, notaries, judges and legal practitioners – grew and had greater influence and above all devised rules which turned them increasingly into orders, separate from craftsmen's and productive categories... In early modern times, it was the *collegia* which took it upon themselves to create or to approve notaries, appropriating a function of public power"; and it was precisely these guilds which were "at the front of the civic parades and town processions, circumstances in which the status of one's group was displayed and its position within the social body was confirmed." The guilds' legal autonomy (both with regard to charters and professional rules), which was recognised by contemporary theoreticians of law, was in fact fundamental, parallel and, to a certain extent, in competition with government authority.

Therefore, as G Lombardo points out (*Tra politica ed economia: le corporazioni di mestiere nella Sicilia moderna*): "The study of guilds should be carried on... along two main lines of research: "that focusing on production and internal structure, and that concerned with the political influence of guilds and their dialectic relationship with central power." The book's editors themselves acknowledge that the underlying aim of the various essays is to examine "convincingly" the relationship between the state and guilds, between guilds and towns, and between towns and the state.

There are also more specific and equally interesting studies aiming to reconstruct the history of the development of trades and professions from the middle ages to the contemporary era such as the examination of the relationship between guild membership and the privilege to obtain citizenship in the old-regime states (P. Ventura, *Mercato delle risorse e identità urbana: cittadinanza e mestiere a Napoli tra XVI e XVII secolo*); the combative presence of the female element in guilds (A. Contini – F. Martelli, *L'Arte dei lanaioli nello Stato regionale toscano, secoli XVII-XVIII*); the importance, in the absence of archival sources, of literary and iconographical sources like the descriptions and illustrations of popular festivals in Naples, as a testimony to the vitality of guilds in Naples in the seventeenth century (G. Muto, *Spazio urbano e identità sociale: le feste del popolo napoletano nella prima età moderna*)

The other contributions are largely based on archival sources and it is worth mentioning them here: A. Zannini, *Il "pregiudizio meccanico" a Venezia in età moderna. Significato e trasformazioni di una frontiera sociale*; F. Trivellato, *Intorno alla corporazione: identità professionale e stratificazione sociale tra Murano e Venezia, secoli XVII-XVIII*; L. Tedoldi, *Servizio pubblico e cittadinanza: il caso degli zerlotti bresciani dal seicento al settecento*; E Merlo, *Idoneità e identità di mestiere: analisi e confronto di alcune esemplificazioni. Milano, XVII-*

XVIII secolo; S. Levati, *Notai e società nello stato di Milano alla fine dell'antico regime, 1750-1800: strategie familiari, reclutamento e ruolo sociale di un gruppo professionale*; G.P. Romagnani, *I mestieri del denaro fra norma e trasgressione. Negozianti, banchieri e "gievriani" nella Torino del Settecento*; C. Orelli, *Emigrazione e mestiere: alcuni percorsi di integrazione nelle città lombarde e toscane di "migranti" dalla Svizzera italiana, secoli XVI-XVIII*; D. Gentilcore, *Regole per i medici, regole per i ciarlatani. Il Protomedicato di Siena tra sei e settecento*; A. Arcangeli, *Mestieri e professioni nella letteratura medica, secoli XV-XVII*; V. Vignano, *I "mezzani" nella Palermo della prima metà del cinquecento: norme, pratiche, modelli aggregativi e reti fiduciarie*.

As we have said, the period covered reaches the beginning of the nineteenth century when after the Napoleonic suppressions and a few anachronistic attempts at reconstruction, the survival of the old trades remained more tied to the values of tradition and to spiritual, religious and welfare aims, as in the case of the Roman confraternities.

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H.H. NAU – B. SCHEFOLD (eds.), *The Historicity of Economics. Continuities and Discontinuities of Historical Thought in 19th and 20th Century Economics*, Springer e Verlag, Berlin –Heidelberg, 2000, pp. VIII-245.

Whether the historical factor in economics should be considered is by no means a new question. Over the years many writers and schools of thought have addressed the issue. To give just some examples: A. Marshall was convinced that not using historical knowledge in economic analysis was like placing economic life on the same footing as that of a butterfly: born yesterday, dead today. W. Cunningham believed that denying the historicity of economics was the same as denying relativity in economic doctrine. The sociologist K. Mannheim was of the opinion that to reject economic historicity was to refuse to solve the problem of how to devise standards and rules in a world which has become increasingly more dynamic. The historicity of economics is a subject which has in fact been debated since the last quarter of the nineteenth century and as we can see from the present book, the debate is still alive and continues.

The book under review is similarly lively and brings together the proceedings of a conference held in Germany, of which it has preserved the order and sequence, with papers being followed generally by critiques. At the heart of the book is the so-called German Historical School of Economics (GHSE) whose epistemology is discussed along with its role in contemporary economic debate. In the book H. Pearson criticises the very definition of the GHSE; D. Lindenfield

places it within the organisational context of teaching and research related to German *cameralismo* which groups together disciplines related to economics, sociology, law and politics; E. Grimmer-Solem stresses the increasing importance of the historical approach in the theory of economic development and social change; G. Hodgson writes on the influence that the GSHE has had on American institutionalism, considered as an active and dominant force in American economic science; U. Witt examines the role of history in the analysis of processes of change and evolution theories; R. Swedberg, who considers M Weber as belonging to the GHSE, discusses the usefulness of Weberian concepts in the development of the new economic sociology; P. Koslowski sees the ethical values of economic actors in the GSHE; R. Klump addresses the relationship between culture and economics; lastly, V. Gioia insists on the fact that it is not possible to understand culture with a specific reference to a subjective system of values.

Overall, the book highlights the fact that during the last fifty years the economic debate has freed the GHSE from the view that considered it a conscious support for a conservative, authoritarian state, while the authors comprised in the book attempt to relate the GHSE to other categories of economic history. Apart from the research into what the GHSE did not stand for and what it did stand for, and into its importance as comparative economics and comparative psychology, the contributors to the book have sought to stress the ties between the GHSE and so-called *cameralismo*, economic institutionalism, economic evolutionalism, economic ethics, the new economic sociology and economics as cultural science and social capital.

The book shows that while it has contributed to various and useful fields of enquiry, historicity is an important factor in both theoretical constructs and practical action. It is indisputable that economic processes and institutions change the course of history and that the validity of economic models is closely related to time and space. This is an interesting and stimulating book.

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H. POHL, *Die rheinischen Sparkassen. Entwicklung und Bedeutung für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft von den Anfängen bis 1990*, Franz Steiner, Verlag, Stuttgart, 2001, pp. 320.

Undoubtedly, research into the history of saving banks in Germany has made considerable progress during the last decade. Until recently, studies concentrated on the description of the history of a particular saving bank, thus neglecting, for the most part, the political, economic and social conditions of

its development. Therefore, it was a widespread opinion among historians of banking that the historiography of saving banks did not meet the common standards of modern business history. However, the situation has changed with a number of publications on the development of several saving banks which made use of the instruments of modern economic and business research. Our knowledge of the role and position of saving banks in the financial system of Germany has been enlarged substantially thereby.

Hans Pohl's study on saving banks in the Rhinelands and their importance for the economic development of this region can be regarded as another important step in this direction. Pohl provides a precise description of saving banks in this region during the last one hundred and fifty years, concentrating on the decisive periods of economic change: industrialisation and its consequences, the period of economic growth after the depression of the 1870s, inflation, stabilisation and the "great slump" in the 1920s, the period of Nazi economy and the years of economic recovery and the so-called "economic miracle" after World War II. Pohl's analysis shows clearly that in the Rhinelands, as well as in other parts of Germany, the development of saving banks depended to a great extent on specific economic conditions. For example, the initiative for establishing saving banks was a response to the underdeveloped economic situation on the eve of industrialisation. In several cities in the region, relief organisations and local authorities tried to lessen social and economic problems by establishing special financial institutions for the poor and the less wealthy part of the population. Later on the government – the Rhinelands was a part of Prussia at that time – controlled the business policy of saving banks by strict regulation. The saving banks, however, were able to pursue a successful business strategy, and soon became one of the decisive elements in the financial system in the Rhinelands, thus influencing economic development as a whole by collecting funds from a large part of the population and operating as credit institutions especially for middle-class businessmen, as in the case of Cologne, Aachen and Düsseldorf.

This development continued in the Kaiserreich until the outbreak of World War I. Pohl again analyses the economic and political preconditions and then the development of saving banks in this period. His description of the economic and political background of the business policy of saving banks is a short survey of the general economic structural change in Germany, and his analysis of the role and development of saving banks is based on a large amount of new archival material, and therefore contains many important insights. It becomes evident why the saving banks after the turn of the century could not only enlarge their business operations considerably and gain a great number of new clients, but also became active rivals of private banks in several cities of the Rhinelands.

The chapters on the developments in the 1920s and the Nazi-period describe

the specific changes in the business policy of the saving banks, as a result of the altered economic policy. The chapter on the economic recovery in Germany after the end of World War II, perhaps the best chapter in the book, describes in detail the fundamental changes in politics and economics forming the new circumstances for business strategies in Germany, after the currency reform of 1948. Pohl also provides an excellent survey on the immense structural changes in the financial sector during this time. The saving banks changed into universal banks, whereas the private universal banks diversified their credit operations by the establishment of a great number of new branches and by seeking new clienteles in almost all parts of the population. The structural changes in the German financial sector led not only to a distinct amalgamation between the business policy of private and saving banks, but also to an immense increase in turnover and profits of the credit sector as a whole.

All in all, Pohl's study on the development of the saving banks in the Rhinelands presents an excellent survey of the topic until recent times. The special role and functions of saving banks within the German financial system is analysed carefully, focusing to a considerable extent on new archival materials. The importance of saving banks for the economy of the Rhinelands and Germany is clearly analysed. Scholars of financial history should be inspired by Pohl's study to undertake research on the development of saving banks in other parts of Germany in order to obtain a precise picture of the role of these important financial institutions in the growth of the German economy.

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M. SORESINA, *Conoscere per amministrare: Luigi Bodio. Statistica, economia e pubblica amministrazione*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2001, pp. 336.

Among the figures of the newly born Kingdom of Italy, Luigi Bodio was certainly one of the most eminent. He was not a politician, even though he was appointed senator of the realm and after 1904 carried out laudable work examining bills. But he was essentially an economist and a statistician and above all a public administrator.

He belonged to a generation which, when he was around twenty years old, was confronted with the sudden and demanding task of helping to organise a country that had never had its own national individuality and which, in just two years found itself having to unify seven of the old Italian states. Although the latter spoke the same language, at least among the upper classes, and although they professed the same religion, they had never had common relations. On the

contrary, their institutions, laws, currency, customs and traditions differed from one another and their relations had not always been friendly.

Like Nicola Miraglia, Luigi Bodio was concerned with organising the state's administrative and economic machinery. While Miraglia was soon involved in managing the country's agricultural wealth, and afterwards monetary circulation when he became general manager of the second most important issuing bank in the country (*Banco di Napoli*) from 1896 to 1926, Bodio set about organising a statistical service virtually from scratch which could provide those governing the country with the largest amount of information about the Italian economy.

Although he was no stranger to political economy and continued to publish writings on public finance, his overriding interest was statistics, understood as an instrument of political economy. Agricultural statistics and statistics on emigration were his forte but an even more influential work was his *Indici misuratori del movimento economico in Italia* in 1890 in which Bodio set out the historical series of Italy's demographic evolution, public health, charities, crime, education, economic trends, finance and taxation, presenting a picture of the Italian economy which was made up of light and shade, indeed more shade than light. He played a valuable and prestigious role in public administration, too, in particular in the Council of State and above all in the constitution, organisation and directing (1901) of the General Emigration Authority which he developed into an effective tool for protecting Italian emigrants and which he left in 1905 when it had become a well-organised and efficient body, and when he went over to the industrial and financial sector.

He owed much of his training as a statistician to Pietro Maestri and above all to Cesare Correnti, "the two instigators and founding fathers of Italian official statistics." Yet he showed his competence and maturity by taking part in the many international conferences which took place over the years and which earned him the respect of the whole of Europe, particularly for the organisational effort he put into the setting up and the development of the international community of statisticians. In the 1870s he was admitted to Europe's most prestigious statistical societies, beginning with the Statistical Society of Paris (1872), the London Society (1874), followed by those of Manchester, Vienna, Berne, Frankfurt and Belgium. In 1909, with the support of French statisticians, he was appointed President of the International Institute of Statistics (IIS) and laboured for the creation of a permanent Office and for the publication of an *Annuaire de statistique internationale*. The turmoil caused by war, however, thwarted his efforts to recover the spirit of collaboration which had existed before the war. The statisticians of the defeated countries were excluded from the IIS and also from the Society of Nations Statistics Office which was set up in 1920.

Overall, the book succeeds in reconstructing the complex figure of Bodio, using both documentation from Bodio's rich personal archive and from a vast

collection of unpublished writings and documents deriving from various other public and private archives as well as contemporary printed material and material produced after Bodio's death in 1920. Finally, more than a third of the book reproduces part of Bodio's extensive correspondence with eminent figures of the period, including Italians and foreigners, statisticians, economists and politicians.

Corrado Francolise
Boston

R. VALLADARES, *Banqueros y vasallos. Felipe IV y el Medio General*. Universidad de Castilla la Mancha, Cuenca, 2002, pp. 149.

Recent research on Castile's economic and social history has brought to light new aspects to improve our view of the key central decades of the seventeenth century and we now know that Castilian reformism survived the end of Olivares' regime in 1643 and lasted for the rest of the seventeenth century. Good proof of this can be found in *Banqueros y Vasallos*, where its author, R. Valladares, explains one of the most interesting plans of fiscal reform in Castile during the seventeenth century, the so called *Medio General* which was at the centre of an intense public debate during the second half of Philip IV's reign.

In the first part of the book, Valladares analyzes the main characteristics of Castile's tax system, emphasizing its problems and the projects that were unsuccessfully tried in the period 1620-43 to solve them. In 1643 a new period began. In 1646 the Cortes of Castile financed the publishing of a book, "Medios políticos para el remedio unico y universal de España", written by Jacinto de Alcázar y Arriaza. Alcázar, himself a royal officer, had spent nearly twenty years collecting taxes in Galice, so he had a first-hand understanding of the problems of the country's taxation. In his book he presented the nucleus of the different projects of *Medio General* discussed in the 1650s and 1660s: a direct tax levied proportionately according to the income levels of the Castilians which would replace the other taxes (pp 62-64). This plan may be considered almost as a revolutionary fiscal reform: it involved the complete transformation of the old Castilian taxation system; the transition from a system based on indirect taxes (such as the *millones*, *alcabalas* and *cientos*) to a new one, whose main fiscal source would be a direct tax.

However, Alcázar's projects were not implemented, and it is interesting to note that the reasons for his failure are the same as those that explain the failure of all the similar plans debated after him. First of all, major technical problems

needed to be solved in order to put into practice Alcázar's schemes, because it was very difficult to estimate the income levels of the Castilians. But second, and more important, the direct tax designed by Alcázar would have ended the nobility's fiscal exemption, and this would have caused serious political problems, especially if we remember, as Valladares does, that the Portuguese rebellion of 1640 was, among many other things, the result of a direct tax on land property introduced in 1637. In actual fact, neither the nobility nor the urban sectors represented in the Castilian Cortes had a real interest in a reform of this kind. New versions of the project were debated in the Cortes of 1655-58 and 1660-64. In both cases the discussion of projects very similar to those proposed by Alcázar years earlier had a prominent role but, again, without any real consequence. It was better for the nobility and urban oligarchies to preserve the traditional indirect taxes, with some improvements in their collection, than to attempt fiscal reform. After all, thanks to privileges and tax evasion, the impact of the fiscal burden on both sectors was lightened. At the same time, these two groups were public-debt owners (*juristas*), so the preservation of traditional taxation was the best way of guaranteeing that the crown would continue to honour its obligations towards them.

Seen from this perspective, it can be said that the Castilian fiscal system had a pervasive distributive effect. Its main burden disproportionately fell on the shoulders of the Castilian peasantry and, particularly, the lower sectors of urban population. They provided the crown with the fiscal incomes then transferred to the nobility and urban oligarchies through the payment of *juros*.

The failure of the *Medio General* and the survival of indirect taxation had serious economic consequences. But there also were important political repercussions. Philip IV had promoted the discussion of the *Medio General* in 1660-1664, hoping that its implementation would provide him with the funds needed to finance the final offensive against the Portuguese rebels which would restore Portugal to the kingdom. Convinced that Portuguese independence was not a real threat against Castilian interests, and tired of twenty years of a hard war, the Cortes did not share the king's objectives, as Valladares shows (pp 109). This was another good reason for obstructing fiscal reform, so there are good grounds for arguing that the failure of *Medio General* was one of the causes of Portuguese independence.

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