

THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CRISIS REVISITED. THE CASE OF THE SOUTHERN ITALIAN SILK INDUSTRY: REGGIO CALABRIA, 1547-1686

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the silk trade in Southern Italy through a quantitative study of exports from the dry-customs port of Reggio Calabria. It traces the experience of Reggio's silk industry from its heyday in the sixteenth century to its collapse in the seventeenth, and it places that experience in the context of the economic decline of Southern Italy and of the literature on the crisis of the seventeenth century.

It is a truism of European economic history that the seventeenth century brought great changes to many areas that, in the preceding three-hundred (or even six-hundred) years had been at the core of the European and the world economy. One need not be a historian of the economy of Europe to know, for example, that an epic shift in the locus of significant economic activity took place in the course of the 1600s and that, as a consequence, after 1650 the core of the European economy was no longer Italy and the Mediterranean, but Northwestern Europe — the United Provinces and, increasingly, Great Britain.

Especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, the details of those changes and of that shift stimulated an intense debate which became a classic of European historiography. That was, of course, the debate on "the crisis of the seventeenth century," best summarized in a series of essays which appeared in *Past and Present* and which Trevor Aston collected and published as *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660*.¹

The breadth and the implications of the material attracted more than economic historians to the debate. There was, of course, Eric Hobsbawm, for whom the crisis of the seventeenth century was one of the big fractures in the history of Europe, understandable only as a crisis of feudalism and as the harbinger, in some areas, of modern capitalism.² But there was also among the active participants in that exchange Hugh Trevor-Roper, once Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who, in a justly-famous essay, argued that the troubles of the seventeenth century could best be understood in political/cultural terms, as the break between the court and the country, as the culmination of the process of state building by which the "new monarchies" and their swelling bureaucracies had come heavily to weigh on the real countries of Europe.³ There was John Elliott, the current Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who, in another classic essay, showed that economic, social, political and cultural factors had all played important roles in the process by which Spain, defeated in the field at Rocroi in 1643, lost the hegemony it had enjoyed in Europe for over a century and embarked on a long process of economic and social stagnation.⁴

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In Italian historiography, “decline” became a major cottage industry, as historians dissected with particular care, and with a great deal of justification, the case of the Republic of Venice. Once the middleman between East and West, the real center of the late-medieval global economy, by the late seventeenth century Venice was well on its way to becoming a mere tourist attraction. Again, it is a commonplace of economic history to say that Venice (like Italy in general) lost its premier role in the world economy as cheaper, lighter textiles from England and Holland displaced it from the Ottoman markets, and as Portuguese and then Dutch competition effectively eliminated it from the spice trade. As one can imagine, the literature on the decline of Venice is immense, and it covers just about every aspect of Venetian economic and social history — from the decline in the number of galleys in its fleet to the depletion of the timber resources for those galleys, from the rise and fall of its woolen and silk industries to the manpower shortage in its ruling class.⁵

Compared to the dotting attention that Venice has received, the rest of Italy has suffered a remarkable neglect.⁶ This has been especially true for the South of Italy, the Kingdom of Naples, which consisted of the entire southern half of the Italian peninsula, from the capital, the city of Naples, south to the heel and the tip of the boot, and the Kingdom (and island) of Sicily. True, in the last generation or so, social and economic historians in Southern Italy (and some in France as well, like Gérard Delille and Gérard Labrot) have paid a good deal of attention to the structures, the trends and the collective mentalities in the early modern South. Some of the work produced in those years, like that of both Delille and Labrot, or of Silvio Zotta, has been innovative and pathbreaking.⁷

Still, by comparison to the efforts spent on the history of Venice in particular, the economic history of Southern Italy in the early modern period (1350-1750 ca.), has not received undue notice, especially as the seventeenth-century crisis is concerned, and especially as quantitative analysis goes.

Yet more attention to the economic and social history of the Italian South would by no means be misplaced. In an economic and social sense, that history is compelling because of, among other things, the great obstacles to the capitalist development of agriculture presented by a complex and rigid “feudal” structure. In the closely-related political sense, that history is equally enticing because of the complex and contradictory role played in both economy and society by a state structure that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Crown had built up at the expense of particularism and localism, but that, in the seventeenth century, the Crown again had chosen to dismantle and yield to the very same centrifugal forces it had earlier sought to tame.⁸

Connecting both the socio-economic and the political aspects of Southern Italian history was a crucial geopolitical fact — the domination of the Italian South by Spain, the subjugation, in other words, of the Kingdom of Naples to Spanish imperialism.

What that meant was that the Italian South in early modern times was in effect a colonial dependency of the Spanish Monarchy, subject to the vagaries of Spanish policy and tied to the fortunes (and misfortunes) of that Monarchy and its enterprises. Until

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the early 1580s, Naples was at the forefront of Spanish political and military ventures from one end of the Mediterranean to the other, contributing men, money and arms to support Spanish designs against the power of Islam. After the early 1580s, as both Spain and the Ottoman Empire disengaged from active confrontation on the inland sea, the Italian South found itself no longer on the frontline of military activity.⁹

But it was long to remain a financial and supply base for Spanish military efforts — in Northern Italy, where in truth Naples had been providing for the defense of Milan ever since the early 1500s; in the Low Countries, where revolt against Spanish rule had broken out in 1566-67; in the Low Countries again and in Germany, where the Thirty Years' War raged from 1618 to 1648, and even beyond that.¹⁰

Of course, the status of colonial dependency was not a new one for Italy's South in early modern times. Ever since the Middle Ages, in fact, economic activities and commercial life in the South had been dominated by Northern Italian merchants and entrepreneurs. Over time, Northern capital (and Northern capitalists) had played a very active role in the production and export of Southern agricultural goods, the "pillars" of the Southern economy — grain, wine, oil, wool and silk.¹¹

Whatever the merits of this last case, the experience of Southern Italy provides fertile ground for testing more than one of the interpretations relating to the crisis of the seventeenth century, from Hobsbawm's to Trevor-Roper's and Elliott's. This paper attempts to do so by examining some long-term trends in one of the "pillars" of the Southern economy, the silk industry. It can document those trends and thus reflect on the process of change in Southern Italy in an age of crisis by means of the best available, though previously unexamined, quantitative data.

The paper is in fact based on a remarkable type of fiscal documents — the registers kept by state officials at dry-customs ports in the provinces of Calabria Citra and Calabria Ultra, the Kingdom's premier silk-producing areas. Those records document the day-by-day shipments of silk declared at customs (and so passing through the customs gates on their way to Naples and to other centers outside the Kingdom), and they note, among other things, the weight of each shipment and the duty levied.¹²

Twenty-one registers, covering the 140-odd years from 1547 to 1686, bring to light the experience of the dry-customs port of Reggio Calabria, a city in the extreme south of Calabria Ultra, itself the southernmost of the Kingdom's twelve provinces.¹³

Its geographic location alone lent Reggio an important role in the affairs of Calabria Ultra and of the Kingdom itself. The city is located in a commanding position on the strait of Messina, right across the island of Sicily, straddling the entrance and the passage to both the Tyrrhenian and the Ionian Seas. Throughout the sixteenth century, too, Reggio had been one of the largest (if not the largest) town in Calabria Ultra. True, its population had remained static between the census of 1532 and 1545, at 2,477 hearths, (ca. 12,385 people), but in the later sixteenth century the city had seen its population grow by over forty percent, to no less than 3,545 hearths (ca. 17,725 people in 1595).¹⁴ By mid-century (1545), Reggio was home to about 4.6% of the population in Calabria Ultra; by end-century (1595), to 5.8%.¹⁵

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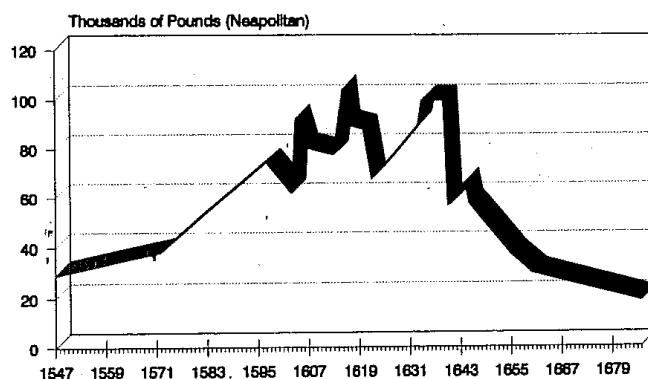
As was so often the case with early modern towns, however, Reggio's strength lay not just in its strategic location or even in its abundant population. (Actually, the latter indicator is protean, for it can signal the social dysfunctions of pauperism and parasitism, as it did for the teeming capital, the city of Naples, and for Reggio itself.)¹⁶ Still, as one might expect from an important provincial center, Reggio's uncontested strength was a reflection of considerable resources, especially its control of the hinterland and its diversified economy. Agriculture, of course, was the linchpin of Reggio's vitality, but important as well, and intimately tied to it, were fishing and trade with the rest of Calabria, with the faraway capital, the city of Naples, and with its neighbors, cities like Messina across the strait in Sicily.

The countryside Reggio commanded was given over to the classic crops of the Southern Italian peninsula — grain, wine, olives and silk. The last crop, grown and spun in large landholdings and small *massarie* alike, found its way to the dry customs port for export to the city of Naples and, to a lesser degree, to Sicily as well.

Reggio was by no means the greatest center for the production and export of silk in Calabria. It was dwarfed, in fact, by Cosenza, in Calabria Citra, a hub which in the sixteenth century was reputed to have produced between nearly half the silk in both Calabrian provinces,¹⁷ and by Monteleone, smaller than Cosenza, but still, at its peak, more than three times larger in output than Reggio.¹⁸ Reggio was a middling port, its export poundage falling between Monteleone's and Paola's, a much smaller town half-way up the boot from Reggio to Cosenza.¹⁹ Though it cannot be said that its size made Reggio "typical" of ports in Southern Calabria, the experience of its silk industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is nonetheless suggestive of the fate of middling dry customs ports in an era of growth, adaptation and dislocation.

That experience is shown in Graph I, "Crisis and Involution, 1547-1686: Silk Exports At Reggio Calabria."

Crisis and Involution, 1547-1686 Silk Exports at Reggio Calabria



Silk Shipments Declared at Customs

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The trends highlighted in the graph fit in very well with those of other indicators for the Italian and European economies in the early modern age. Here is clear evidence of the great economic expansion of the sixteenth century²⁰ — steady growth in silk shipments at Reggio from 1572, with 20,072 pounds, to 1597, with 74,321 pounds, with none of the slowdowns visible in other areas of the economy or even, in other silk-shipping ports, already by the later sixteenth century.²¹

Here too, in the early years of the new century, is a good illustration of the new tide brought by the seventeenth century: the first reversals in the expansionary movement (1604) and the fluctuations, the sputterings and the seeming recoveries that were the hallmarks of the first and second decades of the seventeenth century (1604-1614), with an all-time peak in 1615, when 104,123 pounds of silk were shipped.

No less classic is the movement for the period from 1615 to the very end of the century. The first phase, to 1639, was one of sharp fluctuations, with highs near that of the peak year 1615 and with a great trough (67,384 pounds), interestingly enough, in 1622, the crisis year in so many indicators of economic activity throughout the early modern world.²² The second phase, from 1640 to 1686, was one of catastrophic decline, with shipments falling by almost 40% between 1639 and 1640 (from 99,572 to 56,562 pounds), then sharply again almost by 40% between 1645 and 1655 (from 57,428 to 36,924 pounds) and then, once more, by over 50%, from 1655 to 1686 (to 18,211 pounds).²³ In that last year, silk exports at Reggio Calabria stood at about 18,000 pounds, as against the 29,000 pounds of 1547, the initial year in the series here analyzed. The end of the seventeenth century, then, was one of catastrophic decline for the silk industry in Reggio Calabria. Recovery was not to come for another half-decade: 32,184 pounds were shipped in 1737; 60,492 pounds in 1759.²⁴

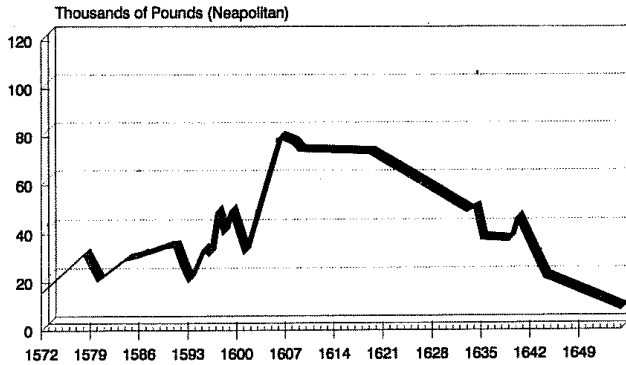
As the evidence here examined makes clear, Reggio shared fully in the great peninsula-wide economic expansion of the “golden age,” as Erasmus with uncharacteristic optimism once referred to his own times.²⁵ But the city shared fully as well in what followed the sixteenth-century “age of gold” — an “age of iron”, one in which “grief and pain... linger[ed] among men, whom harm...[found] defenseless.”²⁶ At Reggio Calabria, too, “the crisis of the seventeenth century” brought a net loss, a real decline in one of the major areas of economic activity.

Reggio shared that decline with other dry-customs ports in both Calabria Ultra and Calabria Citra, and with other regions from one corner of Southern Italy to the other. A case in point is that of Paola, the comparable, if smaller, dry-customs port to the north of Reggio Calabria, which, at its highest point, in 1606, shipped nearly 80,000 pounds of silk.²⁷

The difference in size of exports notwithstanding, the story of Paola’s silk export industry at this time was remarkably similar to Reggio’s. Paola in fact witnessed a remarkable “golden-age” boom in the heyday of the sixteenth century, with its exports more than doubling between 1572 and 1590. That growth was followed by turn-of-the-century sputterings, all-time highs early in the new century, stasis and then sudden,

catastrophic decline. These points are illustrated in Graph II, "Crisis and Involution: Silk Exports at Paola, 1572-1655."

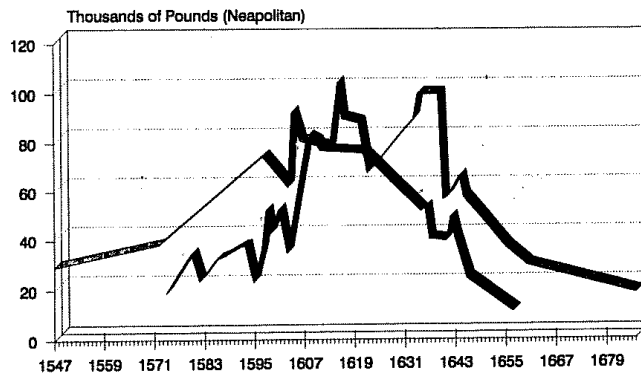
Crisis and Involution, 1572-1655 Silk Exports at Paola



Silk Shipments Declared at Customs

Silk shipments at Paola more than doubled between 1572 and 1590-91, from about 16,000 to nearly more than 34,000, and then rose meteorically, to nearly 50,000 pounds in 1597 and 1599, and nearly 80,000 in 1606. For the next thirteen years, exports at Paola hovered around 72,000-77,000 pounds. No data, unfortunately, is available for the period from 1620 to 1632, but by the early 1630s the decline in silk shipments at Paola was no less precipitous than their rise had been meteoric: 50,000 pounds in 1633, 37,000 in 1639, 21,000 in 1644 and only about 8,000 in 1655.²⁸ As at Reggio, recovery at Paola came only in the eighteenth century: 36,310 pounds of silk were shipped from Paola in 1737, and no less than 111,078 in 1759.²⁹

Crisis and Involution, 1547-1686 Silk Exports at Paola & Reggio



Silk Shipments Declared at Customs

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Graph III, "Crisis and Involution, 1547-1686: Silk Exports at Paola and Reggio," conveniently groups the experience of Paola and Reggio together. It shows that, gross poundage aside, the most substantial difference between the Reggio's and Paola's vicissitudes lay in the fact that at Paola expansion began about a generation later than at Reggio and collapse about a generation earlier.

The experience of the dry-customs ports here examined may well be emblematic of the fate of the silk industry in Southern Italy in the years astride the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It may well be emblematic also of the larger tale of the Southern Italian economy as a whole in an age of dislocation and change. The experience of Paola and Reggio in fact suggests that dissolution, rather than adaptation, were the hallmarks of the silk industry in Southern Italy between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It suggests, too, that, whatever it may have had in store for the Northern Italian economy, the seventeenth-century crisis in Southern Italy brought about a net loss, a clear decline.³⁰

How to account, finally, for the rise and fall of the silk industry in Reggio Calabria? What, if anything, can that single thread tell us about the larger story of the Southern Italian economy in the early modern period? How does the experience of Reggio, or of Paola, or of Calabrian silk, fit in the larger discourse of crisis in Europe in the seventeenth century?

No single factor, needless to say, can account for the great dislocations that marked the experience of Reggio, Paola, and Southern Italy in the new "age of iron." No single explanation, either, can account for the long-term reversals that marked the silk industry in Calabria, and the economy in Southern Italy, in that age of crisis. The debacles at Reggio and Paola, as in Southern Italy generally, involved a large constellation of factors; they were the result of many forces acting in unison, and even at cross-purposes.

That said, it need hardly be stressed that a great many disasters, both natural and man-made, were at the forefront of the downturns experienced in the economic life of Reggio and Paola, as of Southern Italy as a whole. They were visible already in the 1580s, when crises of unprecedented proportions struck Southern Italian agriculture. They were heralded by the classic symptom of agricultural dysfunction in pre-modern economies, bad harvests, and they were accentuated by the transfer of thousands of hectares of land from agriculture to stock farming. Soon the malaise spread from agriculture to trade and industry, and it was borne out by the movement of prices for staples like grain, as by the trend in the balance of payment for the Kingdom at large.³¹

In the early decades of the new century, the business climate for agriculture, as for trade and industry, underwent fluctuations such as those witnessed in the movement of silk shipments from both Reggio and Paola and other indicators.³² A notable factor in those fluctuations seems to have been the appearance of foreign merchants in Calabria early in the 1610s. Far from heralding the opening up of Calabrian economic space to innovation, or the diffusion of Calabrian products to new venues North of the Alps, that presence instead seems to have helped undermine the old Genoese networks of

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financial and commercial mediation as well as the demand and supply networks the Genoese had established in Northern Italy for Southern silk, as for other Southern products.³³

At the same time, too, bad harvests, plagues and famines continued their unholy alliance.³⁴ Then, at mid-century, a heavy new blow struck at Southern Italian life, with the great plague epidemic of 1656. This reduced an already declining population and with it, too, without doubt, the demand for goods and services in general.³⁵ Between 1648 and 1669, the census years closest to the 1656 epidemic, population in the Kingdom as a whole declined by 21.09%, falling from 500,202 to 394,723 hearths. That decline was higher in Calabria than in the Kingdom as whole: slightly more so in Calabria Ultra (21.34%), with the number of hearths going from 46,636 to 34,791, and much more so in (25.40%) in Calabria Citra, with the hearths falling from 56,850 to 46,851.³⁶

Against that devastating loss, Reggio's demographic experience struck an all the more somber note: between 1595 and 1669, it saw its population *rise* from 3,545 to no less than 4,938 hearths, or by nearly forty percent.³⁷ That increase, coupled with the great dependence of Reggio's population on its crumbling silk industry, in an age of recession, must have spelled disaster for the city's teeming population.

As we saw, the demographic losses of the mid-seventeenth century cannot but have reduced the demand for Southern agricultural products, like silk, or for that matter, oil, wine and wool both in the region and outside it. The situation was made much worse by the great difficulties besetting Northern Italy at the same time. There too natural disasters had taken a heavy toll on the population, while foreign competition had caused local industrial and commercial space to shrink.³⁸ As a consequence, Northern Italy fell back on its own agricultural resources, reducing its demand for Southern Italian agricultural products.³⁹

To all these factors must be added, for the South, the old dysfunctions of a rigid economic system and the worsening effects of an extremely tight and regimented credit system, which served, increasingly since the late sixteenth century, as powerful disincentives to investment in agriculture and to innovation or development there and in the economy in general.⁴⁰

A major reason for such a state of affairs was the dominating presence of the state on the credit markets through the great expansion of the government securities system.⁴¹ One of the most important innovations in sixteenth-century financial life, the government securities system had made possible (and continued to make possible) the great expenditures which the Spanish Monarchy incurred in one corner of Europe after the other. But by offering comparatively very high rates of return on the securities it floated, the system siphoned off money from investment in productive activities, like agriculture, and greatly helped dry up credit throughout the Kingdom.⁴² The securities market, and the credit system it created, were of course symbiotically dependent on taxation. The enormous growth of the securities market was in fact made possible by the overwhelming increase in both direct and, especially, indirect taxation which was the hallmark of financial life in Spanish Naples.⁴³

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The tax on silk in Calabria, to give but one pertinent example, rose by nearly 450% between 1540 and 1590, from 0.5 ducats to 2.2 ducats per pound, far outstripping inflation.⁴⁴ Then between 1600 and 1638 — at a time, that is, when dry-customs ports like Reggio and Paola were experiencing very severe difficulties — the yield from those taxes more than tripled, rising from 137,500 to 429,132 ducats a year.⁴⁵ Between February, 1639, and April, 1640, 0.13 additional ducats were added to the taxes levied on silk from Calabria.⁴⁶

The results of that process were obvious for all but the most obtuse to see. In 1640, the *Sommaria*, Naples' highest financial magistracy, sought energetically to dissuade the Viceroy from imposing an additional levy on silk in Calabria, intended once more to fill the trough for Spain's ravenous war machine in the North, arguing that

because of the new taxes on silk in those provinces, many people have started cutting down their mulberry trees and plowing the land where those trees used to stand, so as to sow grain and other victuals, and they are even planting olive trees, because the said silk industry has become harmful rather than profitable to them.⁴⁷

The *Sommaria* had to write this way even though, already in 1611, a petition from Reggio had pointed out that

...in all of [this city's] territory there's no active enterprise except for the making of silk, which lasts three months a year and employs all its citizens and its poor. After that time is past, most people here have no way of earning a living...⁴⁸

No single factor, as we have seen, can be held to account for the problem of "crisis" or "decline" in Southern Italy. But, by the same token, the evidence here examined makes it impossible to deny that a very tight link existed between that "crisis" and that "decline" and the relationship of colonial dependency thrust upon Southern Italy in the early modern period. That relationship, of course, sprang from Spanish dominion, from the heavy toll which Spanish imperialism had taken on the Italian South, ever since the beginnings of the sixteenth century, and which it made even more burdensome as the economic climate decidedly darkened after the 1610s and the 1620s.

In the course of that transition, and even beyond it, taxation in Naples grew in ways unwarranted by the economic or the fiscal realities of the Kingdom or by the economic conjuncture in Naples and abroad. Its primary function, it should be stressed, was not to serve the vital or even the elementary needs of the Kingdom or its citizens, but to fund Spanish adventurism from one corner of Europe to the other — in Northern Italy, the Valtelline, the Low Countries, Germany and Central Europe generally, as, before, in Northern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea — no matter how heavy the cost for Southern Italy or how crippling its effect on economic and civil life there. Between 1631 and 1643, to give but one example from the time of the Thirty Years' War, Naples

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supplied Spain with about eleven million ducats, or, on a yearly average, 840,000 ducats — about half the receipts from all indirect taxes levied each year in the Kingdom between 1616 and 1638 and about a third the proceeds from *all* tax income, both direct and indirect, at its highest level in the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ And the drain continued well after the end of the Thirty Years' War.⁵⁰

A generation after Trevor Aston published the essays on *Crisis in Europe*, the issues raised by the debate on “the crisis of the seventeenth century” resonate still with vitality and relevance. Just as then, too, the evidence does not point unambiguously in one direction, in support of a single explanation. For Southern Italy, as for other regions, it not necessary to choose from one or another set of the explanations originally put forth to account for the dislocations of the seventeenth century.

On the one hand, the experience of the silk industry in Reggio Calabria (and Paola, and perhaps in Southern Italy as a whole) highlights the sputterings and misfirings of a backward type of capitalism, one unlike anything to be found in England and Northern Europe, and one destined to be left behind as the Northern economy was unshackled. On the other hand, that same experience speaks volumes also about the oppressive weight of the “Court” on the “country.” In this case, the “Court” sat in both Naples and Madrid, a double dead weight on the country at large. Its heedless adventurism set the seal on economic decline and social misery, for in Southern Italy too, as in Spain “there are always the same cards, however we shuffle them...governmental ineptitude, and an all-pervading contempt for the harsh facts of economic life.”⁵¹

Notes

Abbreviations:

AGS: Archivo General, Simancas
ASN: Archivio di Stato, Naples
BNN: Biblioteca Nazionale, Naples
BNP: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

I wish to thank the following people who helped in various ways strengthen this piece — the anonymous reviewers of an earlier draft of this paper, Michael Brandl, Gene Brucker, Dian Degnan, Saul Engelbourg, Gilberto Hinojosa, David LoRomer, John Martin, John Francis Reynolds as well as B. Pupini, Don Luigi Cruccu, Dr. Sam 'Il Cavaglione' Lupone degli Orsini and the late Maestro Joseph Pandolfo.

1. Trevor Aston, ed., *Crisis in Europe 1560-1660* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, 1974, 1980). Another classic collection is that edited by Geoffrey Parker and Leslie M. Smith, *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, 1985).

2. Eric J. Hobsbawm, “The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” in Aston, 5-62.

3. H. R. Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” in Aston, 63-102.

4. John H. Elliott, “The Decline of Spain,” in Aston, 177-205.

5. For an excellent introduction to the vast literature on this subject, cf. the articles in Brian Pullan, ed., *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Methuen & Co., 1968). Cf. also the essays in *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII* (Venice-Rome: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1961); Domenico Sella, *Commerci e industrie a Venezia nel secolo XVII* (Venice-Rome: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1961); and Alberto Tenenti's *Naufrages, corsaires et assurances*

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es maritimes à Venise, 1592-1609 (Paris: SEVPEN, 1959), *Venezia e i corsari, 1580-1615* (Bari: Laterza, 1961), and *Cristoforo da Canal: la marine vénitienne avant Lépante* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1962). Also useful are James C. Tracy, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960) and, for a later period, Giovanni Tabacco, *Andrea Tron e la crisi dell'aristocrazia senatoria a Venezia* (Trieste: Università degli Studi, 1957) and Gianfranco Torcellan, *Una figura della Venezia settecentesca: Andrea Memmo (Ricerche sulla crisi dell'aristocrazia veneziana)* (Venice-Rome: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1963).

6. For Lombardy, however, cf. Domenico Sella's stimulating *Crisis and Continuity: the Economy of Spanish Lombardy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979) and the essays in Aldo de Maddalena's collection, *Dalla città al borgo. Avvio di una metamorfosi economica e sociale nella Lombardia spagnola* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1982).

7. Gérard Delille, *Croissance d'une société. Montesarchio et la Vallée Caudine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, 1973) and *Famille et propriété dans le Royaume de Naples (XVe-XIX siècle)*, (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1985); Gérard Labrot, *Quand l'histoire murmure. Villages et campagnes du Royaume de Naples (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1995); Silvio Zotta, "Momenti e problemi di una crisi agraria in uno 'stato' feudale napoletano (1585-1615)," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome*, 1978, pp. 715-796; Angelo Massafra, *Problemi di storia delle campagne meridionali nell'età moderna e contemporanea* (Bari: Dedalo, 1981) and *Campagne e territorio nel Mezzogiorno fra Settecento e Ottocento* (Bari: Dedalo, 1984).

8. Cf. Antonio Calabria, *The Cost of Empire: The Finances of the Kingdom of Naples in the Time of Spanish Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

9. Cf. Rosario Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli. Le origini (1585-1647)* (Bari: Laterza, 1967), *passim*.

10. Cf. Calabria, ch. 2 and *passim*.

11. Cf., in general, Giuseppe Galasso, *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965, 1975); *Dal Comune medievale all'Unità. Linee di storia meridionale* (Bari: Laterza, 1971); *L'Italia come problema storiografico* (Turin: UTET, 1979); David Abulafia, *The Two Italies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), *passim*; Alfonso Silvestri, "Sull'attività bancaria napoletana durante il periodo aragonese," *Bollettino dell'Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli*, 1953, 80-120.

12. The records usually provide additional information, such as the name(s) of the shipper(s) or their agents, the destination of the shipment (though this was usually the city of Naples and may be noted generally for each register as a whole).

13. ASN. *Sommaria. Arrendamenti*. Fasci 161 II, f. 23r, 30r (1547); 163, ff. 2r-4r, 19r-22r, 25r (1548); 176, ff. 43r-58v (1572); 209 (1597); 218 (1602-03 [10 months; April, May missing]); 220 (1603-04); 226 (1606-07); 239 (1613); 248 (1615); 252 (1616); 271 (1620); 278 (1622); 304 (1633-34, 1634-35); 329 (1639-40); 331 (1640-41); 338 (1641-42); 341 (1644); 349 (1645); 363 (1655); 367 (1655 [sic]); 375 (1660); 385 (1686). On silk in sixteenth-century Calabria in general, cf. Galasso's "Seta e commercio del ferro nell'economia napoletana del tardo Cinquecento," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1963, 629-640.

14. Karl Julius Beloch, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Italiens*, vol. 1 (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1937), 266.

15. Calculations based on *Ibid.*, 265.

16. For early modern economy and society in Calabria, cf. Galasso's classic *Economia e società nella Calabria del Cinquecento* (Naples, 1967). For Reggio, cf. *Ibid.*, 102, 365, 400; for Naples, Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 27-36 and the literature there cited.

17. Galasso, *Economia e società*, 150. At its peak, in 1572, Cosenza exported 561,659 pounds of silk (ASN. *Sommaria. Arrendamenti*, Fascio 176). For an analysis of silk exports from Cosenza, Monteleone and Paola, cf. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 21-24.

18. ASN. *Sommaria. Arrendamenti*, Fasci 219 (Monteleone, 1603: 327,815 pounds) and 248 (Reggio, 1615: 104,123 pounds [cf. *infra*]).

19. At its peak in 1606, Paola exported 79,268 pounds of silk (ASN. *Sommaria. Arrendamenti*, Fascio 225).

20. On the sixteenth-century expansion, see Galasso, *Economia e società*, *passim*.

21. Cf. Galasso, ch. 6, and Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 22 (the dry-customs port of Cosenza, where the expansionary tide had already turned by the mid-1580s).

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22. On this point, cf. Ruggiero Romano, "Tra XVI e XVII secolo. Una crisi economica: 1618-1622," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1962, pp. 480-531 (available also in the author's *L'Europa tra due crisi* [Turin: Einaudi, 1980], pp. 76-147 and in a shortened English version in Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, editors, *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978], pp. 165-225).
23. Cf., for comparison, the classic paper by Domenico Sella, "The Rise and Fall of the Venetian Woollen Industry," in Pullan, 106-125.
24. ASN. *Sommaria. Arrendamenti*, Fasci 396 (1737) and 397 (1759).
25. Desiderius Erasmus, quoted in Myron Gilmore, *The World of Humanism 1453-1517* (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), 260.
26. Hesiod, *The Works and Days*, "The Five Ages," in Bernard Knox, editor, *The Norton Book of Classical Literature* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993), 194.
27. Cf. note 19, above.
28. For Paola's experience, cf. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, pp. 23-24. The archival references for the Paola figures are as in *Ibid.*, p. 23, note 70.
29. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 23-24.
30. For the Lombard economy, cf. Domenico Sella's very persuasive case, in *Crisis and Change*. The evidence given in this paper casts doubt on the more optimistic suggestions made in Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 25.
31. Cf. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 20 and the literature there cited.
32. *Ibid.*, ch. 1 and the literature there cited.
33. This very plausible argument is Professor Galasso's; cf. *Economia e società*, 394-395. By that same time, Genoese merchant-bankers were virtually disappearing from the commanding positions as shippers and agents that they had held in Calabria's silk industry in the sixteenth century. On the Genoese in Naples in the 1500s, cf. Antonio Calabria, "Finanzieri genovesi nel Regno di Napoli nel Cinquecento," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 1989, 578-613.
34. There is no mention in the literature of climatic changes or of disease affecting either the silkworms or the mulberry trees essential to silk production. For strong evidence against the incidence of such diseases between at least 1587 and 1611, cf. Galasso, *Economia e società*, 349-353, 365.
35. An interesting account of the epidemic of 1656 is in BNP. Ms. Italiens, Ms. 299, ff. 139r-158r ("Della Peste di Napoli dell'Anno Bisestile 1656"). Cf. also Salvatore de Renzi, *Napoli nell'anno 1656* (Naples: Tipografia di Domenico de Pascale, 1867).
36. Beloch, vol. 1, 215. But such figures may well underestimate the real losses: cf. Galasso, *Economia e società*, 338-344.
37. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 266.
38. Cf. Carlo Cipolla, "The Economic Decline of Italy" (a revised version of "The Decline of Italy: the case of a fully matured economy," *The Economic History Review*, series 2, vol. 5, 1952, 178-187), in Pullan, *Crisis and Change*, 127-145. Cf. also Sella, *Crisis and Continuity*, passim.
39. Galasso, *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno*, 180.
40. Cf. Zotta, passim.
41. On the workings of this system, cf. the works by James Tracy *A Financial Revolution in the Habsburg Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, esp. ch. 6.
42. On the high rates of return in Naples (as against Flanders, for example), cf. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, ch. 6, passim.
43. *Ibid.*, passim, esp. chs. 3, 5.
44. Galasso, *Economia e società*, 146.
45. BNN. Ms. XI-B-39, ff. 204v, 208v.
46. *Ibid.*, ff. 204v, 208r.
47. Quoted in Galasso, *Economia e società*, 366.
48. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 365.
49. Cf. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire*, 53, 134.
50. All this was made much worse by the backwardness and brutality of Calabria's (and Southern Italy's) ruling class and by the rapaciousness of its civil servants. For the former, cf. Galasso, *Economia e società*, passim; for the latter, AGS. *Secretarias Provinciales*, legajo 235, passim.

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51. Elliott, in Aston, 193. Abulafia, David, *The Two Italies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

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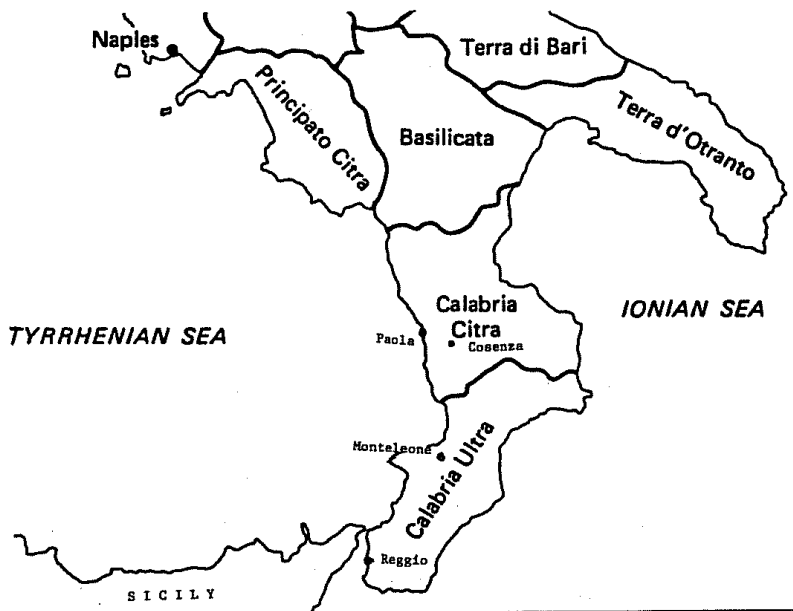
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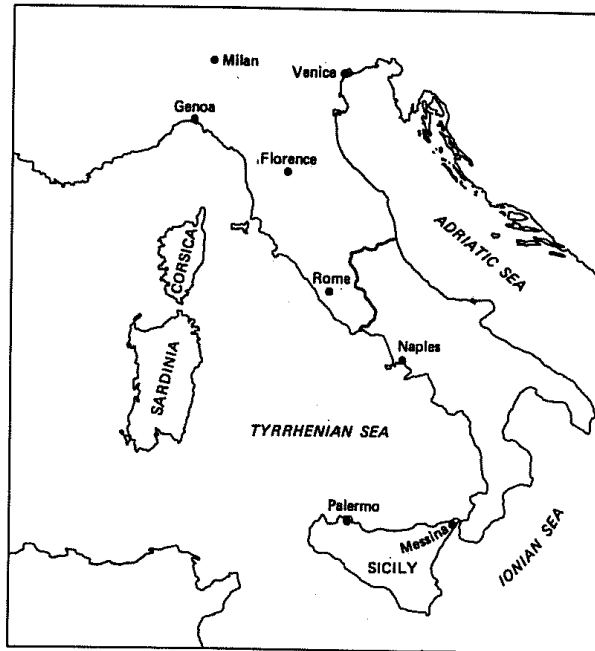
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Some Silk Centers in Calabria Citra and Ultra

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Map 1 General map of Italy

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Map 2 The twelve provinces of the Kingdom of Naples, adapted from *Italia*, Giovanni Antonio Magini (Bologna, 1620)

