

# JCU ScholarShip

## Rural Italy after Unification: A Microhistorical Comparative Study on Southern Jacquerie in the Matese, 1861-1877

Item Type	Thesis
Authors	Epifani, Amelia
Citation	Epifani, Amelia. "Rural Italy after Unification: A Microhistorical Comparative Study on Southern Jacquerie in the Matese, 1861-1877". BA Thesis, John Cabot University, Rome, Italy. 2018.
Rights	Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	2026-05-09 20:12:43
Item License	<a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/">http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/513">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/513</a>



## **John Cabot University**

Department of History

Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs and History

### **Rural Italy after Unification: A Microhistorical Comparative Study on Southern Jacquerie in the Matese, 1861-1877**

Amelia Epifani

First Reader  
Vanda Wilcox

Second Reader  
Gene Ogle

Fall 2018

## Abstract

The mountains of the Matese hosted two of the most significant episodes of dissent in the first decades of post-Unification Italian history. Brigandage and the attempted anarchist revolution took place in different historical moments and involved different actors, yet both provided a similar revolutionary answer to the so-called Southern Question. The microhistorical comparative study carried out in this thesis analyzes the political agency of the Matese peasantry as exemplified by the brigand *Banda Giordano* and the anarchist *Banda del Matese*. In particular, it hypothesizes that the success of the *Banda Giordano* stemmed from its roots in the territory, insofar as the similar cultural and social background was instrumental in the peasants' decision to collaborate with the brigands. On the other hand, the different background of *Banda del Matese* alienated the peasantry as it appeared "foreign." By 1877, a full decade into peasant revolts, the anarchists arrived from the North presenting a more abstract enemy than the tangible one that the peasantry needed to fight. As a result, the peasants felt that a new uprising would only provoke tough retaliation by the National Army. Notwithstanding the differences in the results, both episodes cast into question the social legitimacy of the new State's institutions, and, even more importantly, they defied the Northern narrative of political passivity of the Southern peasantry. Shedding a light on the political agency of the peasantry ultimately opens a number of questions that still need to be investigated regarding the political consciousness of contemporary Southern Italy and the evolution of Italian national identity.

## **Dedication**

To the people of the South, brigands and intellectuals of fierce spirits and bright minds.

To my mother, Annamaria, the strongest revolutionary I know, and to my father and brother,

Maurizio and Enea, who know nothing of revolution but taught me to love our land immensely.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you, Professor Wilcox for your patient guidance and support over the years and in the realization of this project. I am grateful because you shared with me your invaluable advice and expertise, and taught me to appreciate the history of my own country.

Thank you, Professor Ogle, for the constant encouragement and attention. Your lectures and your anecdotes made me question my perception of history, and instilled in me the love for its forgotten protagonists.

Special acknowledgements go also to Professor Lanzone, for encouraging me to be proud of my origins and convincing me to double major in History, and to Professor Jones, for having taught me the art of English composition three years ago and having read this thesis almost as many times as me.

Finally, I am thankful to all the friends and family that have accompanied me in this venture.

Thank you for offering me incessant support regardless of how many times I repeated to you the same stories.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
The Historiography of the South.....	3
The Advantages of Microhistory.....	9
2. Before the Revolts: The Birth of the “Southern Question”.....	12
Economy and Society in Pre-Unification South.....	14
Post-Unification South Through the Eyes of the Elites.....	16
Governmental measures.....	21
The Southern Question in the Matese and the Terra di Lavoro Province.....	25
3. Post-Unification Brigandage: Political Modern Jacquerie?.....	31
The Nature of Brigandage.....	35
Brigandage in the Matese and Terra di Lavoro.....	39
Cosimo Giordano and the <i>Banda Giordano</i> : One Week in the Matese in 1861.....	43
The Massacre of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni.....	46
A Reevaluation of Brigandage in the Matese.....	48
4. The <i>Banda del Matese</i> and the Post-Unification Jacquerie.....	54

The Social Revolution: One Week in the Matese in 1877 .....	55
The <i>Banda Giordano</i> and the <i>Banda del Matese</i> : A Comparative Analysis .....	64
5. Conclusion .....	75
Bibliography .....	78

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Terra di Lavoro.....	27
Figure 2 Brigandage in the South .....	35
Figure 3 Brigands in the Matese. ....	42
Figure 4 Matese. Main Uprisings (1860).....	46

*Si ammazzi questi birbandi  
Per fare la spia ai signori briganti  
Chi la spia vuolee fari  
Questa morte faciarrà.*

*Let us kill these scoundrels/ For having spied on the brigands/ Who wants to be a spy/ Shall die like this.*

These words in broken Italian were written on a note left by Cosimo Giordano in the mouth of Francesco Prece, a local whom he killed for betraying Pontelandolfo and joining the Unitary cause. They symbolize the dramatic allegiance of the Matese peasantry to their land and beliefs.

# 1. Introduction

On 17 March 1861, Italy finally achieved Unification. The Kingdom of Sardinia, led by Victor Emmanuel II (1820-1878), took over the command of the country replacing the Bourbon rule in the South. The rapid realization post Unification of the social and economic differences that separated the South from the North turned out to be traumatic for those patriots who had disregarded them during the *Risorgimento*. The Italian ethno-culturalism that had served as the basis of the Unification process was suddenly cast into question, as Northerners and Southerners found themselves unable to communicate, both literally and metaphorically. Nine million people in the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies struggled to accept the new Piedmontese rule, and set in motion a series of rebellions collectively known as the *Grande Brigantaggio* (Great Brigandism). Brigandage was the violent expression of a failed process of State formation, inasmuch as social unrest epitomized the failure of the government to respond to its citizens' needs. As such, it had long term consequences on the legitimacy of the Italian state, which, arguably, still struggles to obtain "mass loyalty" in the South.

In the first years of the Kingdom of Italy, the Italian ruling class came to face the famous "Southern Question," that is, the problem of social and economic backwardness of the South. Narratives of "resistance to civilization" saturated the Italian national press in convincing the ruling elites of the barbarity and lack of political consciousness in the South. After Unification, the ruling class of the North viewed the South through these prejudiced lenses and seemed to not understand the true nature of Southern society and its cultural traditions. Thus, brigandage and

other forms of rebellion were anathematized as the inversion of the nation, society, and law.<sup>1</sup> The criminalization of brigandage, and with it of the Southern peasantry, promoted a still-ongoing narrative of political passivity of the South in describing a process of quasi-colonization by the North.

This research will attempt to reevaluate the Southern peasantry in a positive light by attributing to it political agency and proactivity. It will carry out a microhistorical comparative study centered on two episodes of rebellion that took place in the Matese, in the southern region of Campania, between 1861-1877. The first episode is the story of the 1861 massacres of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni, in which the local peasantry and the brigands killed forty soldiers of the National Army. This action produced a violent retaliation by the army itself, who set the towns on fire and terrorized the peasantry over the following years. The second event is the attempted anarchist insurrection that took place in 1877. The Internationalist anarchists tried to engage the local peasantry in their “social revolution,” but encountered only indifference. Although both episodes pertain to microhistory, they make larger statements on identity and political agency in the context of peasant militancy. This thesis argues that the anarchist *Banda del Matese* failed to appeal to the shared identity of the peasant communities, insofar as the anarchists were far removed from those environments. In addition, the exercise of political agency by the peasantry, acutely expressed in their refusal of insurrectionary activities, derived from their previous experience of suppression in the years of brigandage. On the other hand, the peasantry had been instrumental to the development of brigandage in the Matese, as they supported the brigands’ cause and shared with them a common local identity.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Dickie, “Stereotypes of the Italian South, 1860-1900,” in *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, edited by Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (Exeter:University of Exeter Press, 1997), 121.

Before delving deeper into the history of the Matese, however, a digression is needed in order to clarify the central concept of this study, i.e. jacquerie. The word jacquerie comes from the peasant revolt of the “jacques” in France, in May-June 1358 during the Hundred Years’ War. The revolt was carried out against the feudal lords, who had abandoned King John II (1319-1364) at the Battle of Poitiers (1355) causing him to be captured by the English. In the nineteenth century the word started to evolve to indicate any “peasant revolt, especially a very bloody one.”<sup>2</sup> Past interpretations of the jacquerie assumed that the revolts had one meaning and one cause, whose origins could be uncovered by looking at documentation, historical context, or the political stance of the perpetrators. This thesis will argue that the motivations and the perceptions of the actors involved in jacquerie are instead various, and change according to the observer.<sup>3</sup> The term jacquerie ultimately serves the purpose of this study because of its anti-feudal original connotation, which fits in the context of post-Unification South, and because it allows for a flexibility in interpretation necessary for a study centered around a peasant society.

### **The Historiography of the South**

This thesis attempts to thread together and correlate diverse narratives about the Southern peasantry and their role in the politics of unified Italy. Hence, an outline of the existing literature should be first laid out to better understand the implications of this comparative approach. Since Unification, scholars have been interested in investigating the Southern Question. Their theories have generated various academic debates on the nature of Southern society vis à vis the rest of Italy that have affected longer-term historiography. If the initial approach in the nineteenth

---

<sup>2</sup> Justine Firnhaber-Baker, “The Eponymous Jacquerie: Making Revolt Mean Some Things,” *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Firnhaber-Baker, “The Eponymous Jacquerie,” 3.

century was to simply identify the division between the rational North and the rebellious South, more recent research has tried to contextualize Southern rebellions by providing sociological and economic explanations of the phenomenon, including feudalism and communalism.

The history of Southern brigandage and peasant militancy in Italy is necessarily tied to the birth of the Southern Question. In fact, the increasing dissociation of the South from the Italian Kingdom arguably compromised the Italian patriotic discourse promoted by the figures of the Risorgimento at a national level. This debate and its social consequences have interested scholars – both Italian and foreign – since 1861. The extensive literature on the topic offers a comprehensive explanation of Southern backwardness and militancy while providing crucial details that enrich the narratives. To this end, historical literature is more useful than contemporary literature to understand the development of the phenomena, for it shaped key narratives about the South for the following century.

The first chapter of this study analyzes Sidney Sonnino and Leopoldo Franchetti's *La Sicilia nel 1876* and Pasquale Villari's *Lettere Meridionali*. Both works, written after 1861, exemplify the overtly colonialist post-Unification discourse that saw the weaker southern society inevitably succumb to the more developed North. The intellectual and governing elites of the country, who were primarily Northern, separated the “civilized” and liberal North from the “backward” and violent South. This narrative presented in *La Sicilia nel 1876* and the *Lettere Meridionali* contributed to the stereotypization of the South and to the creation of problematic historical narratives, that were nonetheless reused with some adaptations in more contemporary historiography.

Edward C. Banfield's *The Moral Basis of a Backwards Society* provides an example of this ongoing influence. Banfield maintained that the South lacked social capital due to the ethos

of “amoral familism,” that is to say, the prevalence of the interests of nuclear family over those of the community. For Banfield, Southern society was centered around the family, which hindered its ability to collaborate for the common good, and generated distrust and envy among its members. He concluded that it was this internal isolation to condemn the South to social and economic stagnation. Banfield conducted his controversial study in 1955 in the town of Chiaromonte, in the region of Basilicata. While his arguments are rooted in empirical observation, his findings were easily generalized in disregarding the existence of different Southern peasant societies.

In his essay “Challenging *Meridionalismo*: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy,” Jonathan Morris combines Banfield’s findings with the claims of early scholars of the Southern Question, including Sonnino, Villari, and Franchetti. According to Morris, after the demise of feudalism in the South, the newly emerged bourgeoisie did not overthrow the old nobility but conformed with its practices at the cost of the central State. Morris maintains that the political corruption, clientelism and social torpor that came to characterize the South are explainable through both Banfield’s “amoral familism” and the theories of nineteenth-century scholars, who deemed the character of the Southern peasantry tied to the land and the landowners. While similar conflation offer valid sociological interpretations of the Southern Question, they reiterate both the early scholars’ stereotyping and Banfield’s generalizations, thus limiting the understanding of the real dimensions of the Southern Question and the socio-political responses of the South.

Nonetheless, in the past decades, the history of the Italian South, i.e. the *Mezzogiorno*, has been revised partly due to the national social emancipation and economic growth that took place starting from the 1970s. This “revisionist history” was a response to the emergence of new

political narratives about the North and the South that much resembled post-Unification discourse. For instance, parties such as the Northern League – or its Southern nemesis the Neo-Bourbon movement – brought new attention to the limits of the *Risorgimento* by insisting on its divisive outcomes, which consequently exacerbated the political and social divisions within the nation. A “revisionist history” of Italian Unification therefore developed to rehabilitate the image of the South and eradicate the consolidated narratives of its inherent social and economic backwardness. This “revisionist history” has not only stressed the relative wealth of the South before 1860, but it also has politicized Southern responses to Unification, promoting a new understanding of the phenomenon of peasant militancy in the region as an expression of social discontent.

Brigandage in particular has been revised in contemporary literature. In the nineteenth century, the reading of brigandage given by the ruling classes aimed at curtailing the political dimension of the phenomenon, insisting on its criminal character and nature of social protest. However, revisionist histories of brigandage argue that the phenomenon was primarily political, and that the social aspect of brigandage was subordinated to the political in the context of civic developments in the South. Primary examples of such revisionism are Franco Molfese’s *Storia del Brigantaggio dopo l’Unità*, which will be discussed in the second chapter, and John A. Davis’ essay “The South and the Risorgimento: Histories and Counter-Histories.” Both authors insist on the various dimensions of Southern resentment towards the Italian State, highlighting the complexity of brigandage as a political phenomenon.

According to them, the interpretation of brigandage as a form of popular resistance against the Northern invader and against Unification is an oversimplification of much more complex and confused realities. For Davis, brigandage set “Southerner against Southerner” in a

scenario where violence constituted “the last chapter in a history of the pervasive struggles between and among peasants, landowners and local communities that were rooted in the rural South’s traumatic encounters with modernity.”<sup>4</sup> The confrontation between these two social forces, as well as the struggle of the radicals and democrats to eliminate the Northern monarchist imprint on Unification, dominated the politics of the Risorgimento, and with it the political form of the new Italy.<sup>5</sup> Like Molfese, Davis stresses the various dimensions of Southern resentment towards the Italian State, and brings attention to the complexity of brigandage as a whole. In this regard, in his volume *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento*, Giovanni de Matteo concurs with Davis and Molfese. de Matteo insists on the individual dimension of brigandage as he differentiates between the various political ideologies of the brigands. For him, traditional brigandage embodied a political struggle, which saw the peasantry pursue its class objectives in trying to remove a “foreign king.”<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of its political motivations, brigandage significantly attracted the peasantry. On the contrary, other more purely political movements, such as anarcho-socialism, did not. Comparisons between brigandage and anarchist social revolutions have not been significantly carried out in literature. Even in the local historiography of the Matese, where both phenomena took place within ten years of one another, the two topics have been explored separately. The scholarly literature on the Southern Question and brigandage is mostly macroanalytical, whereas the insurrection of the Matese is discussed almost exclusively at the local level. The majority of the authors that have studied the events of the Matese are from the area, and have framed their studies as part of reconstruction of local histories. Relevant works in this regard include Leone

---

<sup>4</sup> John A. Davis, "The South and the Risorgimento: Histories and Counter-Histories," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 19, no. 1 (2014), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, "The South and the Risorgimento," 6.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento. Legittimisti e Briganti tra i Borbone e i Savoia* (Naples: Alfredo Guida Editore, 2000), 176.

Gasparini's *La Banda del Matese: La guerriglia nell'Italia Post-Unitaria*, and Bruno Tomasiello's *La Banda del Matese 1876-1878. I Documenti, le Testimonianze, la Stampa dell'Epoca*. Both works evaluate primary sources, and discuss the developments of the Matese insurrection in the context of nineteenth century Campania. Gasparini and Tomasiello adopted a microhistorical approach to provide greater details to the narrative. However, both fail to insert their discussions on the *Banda* in the broader context of post-Unification Southern rebellions, but instead link it to internal developments of the Italian anarchist movement, as it is the case with most literature on the *Banda del Matese*.

Despite this general trend, however, a few significant scholarly works have shaped discussions around the *Banda del Matese*. Franco della Peruta's "La Banda del Matese e il Fallimento della Teoria Anarchica della Moderna 'Jacquerie' in Italia" discusses theories within the anarchist movement in Italy, focusing in particular on Mikhail Bakunin's influence. Della Peruta provides a connection between the theoretical developments of anarchism and its "propaganda of the deed" with the events of the Matese. Although he does not mention brigandage directly, he stresses the link between Bakunian theory and brigand band-war tactics to provide a theoretical explanation of the insurrection of 1877. Nunzio Pernicone in his book *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* builds on della Peruta's study by focusing on the actions of the peasantry. For Pernicone, the *Banda del Matese* hoped that the momentum generated by their initial actions would last long enough to spark an independent peasant rebellion, which instead was not the case. Pernicone's emphasis on the indifferent behavior of the peasants vis à vis the anarchists is essential to the understanding of the Matese insurrection. Similarly, his remarks on the crucial role of the peasantry in the revolution fit into the broader narrative of Southern

rebellions, shedding light on the nature of popular support for brigandage and revolutionary movements as a whole.

### **The Advantages of Microhistory**

Nonetheless, a common trend of overgeneralization and oversimplification has remained both in older and contemporary historical literature. While the recent revision of Southern history constitutes important progress towards a more nuanced and unprejudiced history of the Southern Question, these narratives need to be contextualized in their regional environments, particularly when making use of a microhistorical analysis. Although large scale analyses are crucial to understand the national effects of Southern resistance, this literature could be consolidated by micro-historical studies that would bring it closer to reality and lived experience. The complexity of the Southern Question and post-Unification rebellions requires a restricted scale of investigation to gain a more intimate understanding of the actors involved, of their experiences, and of the historical processes that they set in motion.

Microhistory restricts the unit of historical research to a distinct event or group of people and thus allows for more specific studies. It emerged in the 1970s from several independent traditions, primarily French and Italian, in opposition to the large-scale quantitative models of analysis proposed by the *Annales* school.<sup>7</sup> It was presented as the “culmination of the functional-structural approach,” that is, an analytical approach that looks at the roles of particular structures within society. To this end, microhistory explored topics such as the family, the relationships between the sexes, fashion, and cohorts, all of which were intrinsic to a society and determined

---

<sup>7</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993), 15-17.

its character.<sup>8</sup> These and other questions that were previously disregarded as trivial and peripheral became central objects of investigation for historians. Ultimately, the scope of historical studies was broadened to include the personal and local dimensions, and history itself cooperated with anthropology, ethnology and other similar disciplines to further its research.

Microhistory attempts to reconstruct the “fabric of society” by differentiating among different contexts and responses to historical phenomena.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the stories that microhistory investigates take into consideration not only the local, but also the individual level of analysis. The exploration of the personal and the quotidian allows researchers to acquire more intimate knowledge of a society and its mechanisms, and facilitates hypotheses regarding the causes and consequences of developments such as jacquerie. Studies on the jacquerie are generally a product of the “little facts of history,” which convey the experience of historical characters at the micro-level of everyday life.<sup>10</sup> Microhistory places at the center of its narrative lived realities and thus historicizes actors that are generally dismissed as secondary or irrelevant, including peasants. In this sense, it works similarly to the “history from below,” accounting for the experiences of common individuals, masses, and a-historical people.

In the attempt to explain the specific characteristics and identities of the communities engaged in the post-Unification rebellions, this study makes use of nineteenth century newspaper articles, telegrams, reports, and essays, as well as a wealth of secondary literature. However, it is necessary to justify the use of conjectures. In studies of jacquerie, as it largely the case in microhistorical research, the collection of sources and historical material is difficult. Many of the people described in these stories could not write and did not leave records. Except for few

---

<sup>8</sup> Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, "Microhistory," 17-19.

<sup>9</sup> István Szijártó, “Four Arguments for Microhistory,” *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (2002), 210.

<sup>10</sup> Szijártó, “Four Arguments for Microhistory,” 211.

original accounts, the information available was often incomplete, biased, or from a later period, hence the use of “tentative language” to draw conclusions in this study.

That said, this research challenges the assumed role of the Southern peasantry vis à vis the Southern Question, both in its historical and modern manifestation. To this end, it tries to present Southerners as people with a rich political consciousness that was – and is – pivotal in the resolution of the Southern Question. It highlights how the history of the Southern rebellions is actually a history of various representations of the South, owing to the variety of cultures and approaches to Unification. First brigandage and later anarchy, tried to engage the peasantry in armed resistance in the period 1860-1880s with devastating results for the South, and further aggravating the Southern Question. The long term consequences of these events rest in their significance for the Southern collective memory and identity, both of which have been profoundly shaped by post-Unification jacquerie. The unifying power of these rebellions still affects contemporary Southern Italians, who look back at the early years of Unification as a time of strife and great pride. Thus, this research is not only the study of past events, but also the exploration of long-lasting narratives whose influence is still enduring.

## 2. Before the Revolts: The Birth of the “Southern Question”

Although Italians had always recognized differences among the various peoples and lands of the country, Unification enhanced these divisions by connecting for the first time Northerners and Southerners.<sup>11</sup> The “Southern Question,” which emerged thereafter, refers to the problem of the perceived social and economic backwardness of the South. Theorizing the term “Southern Question” is difficult, for there are numerous hypotheses regarding its birth and development in light of Unification. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) remains one of the most authoritative scholars of the “Southern Question.” He attributed the social backwardness of the South to a “great social disintegration” that saw the opposition of the large peasant mass to the rural bourgeoisie and to the landowners and intellectuals. For Gramsci:

Southern peasants are in perpetual ferment, but as a mass they are unable to give a centralized expression to their aspirations and needs. The middle strata of intellectuals receives the impulses for its political and ideological activity from the peasant base. [...] The large landlords in the political field, and the great intellectuals in the ideological field, centralize and dominate the whole complex of manifestations.<sup>12</sup>

Such a relationship facilitated the creation of an “agrarian bloc,” which functioned as an intermediary between Northern capitalism and the large banks in order to preserve the status quo.

---

<sup>11</sup> The North and the South are the two macro-regions of Italy. The North extends approximately from the Alps to Tuscany, and the South from Naples to Sicily. Historically speaking, the two regions were divided by the Papal States, which included modern-day Latium, the Marches, Umbria, and Emilia-Romagna. This division contributed to the theorization of the unconciliable separation between the two regions. Furthermore, North and South were ruled by two different foreign empires, namely, the Spanish empire led by the Bourbon monarchy, and the Austro-Hungarian empire led by the Hapsburg. Sardinia and Piedmont were controlled by the independent Savoy monarchy, which eventually led the process of Unification. Consequently, Northern and Southern societies developed differently both politically and economically.

<sup>12</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, tr. Pasquale Verdicchio (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Distribution, 2005), 10-1.

Hence, Unification and its aftermath provided an opportunity for Southern agrarian conservative interests to ally with the Northern industrialists, in a collaboration “for liberation” that only furthered the social imbalances existing in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.<sup>13</sup>

Gramsci thus linked the social and cultural backwardness of the South with the country’s economic dualism. He sided with the scholarship that considered Unification as economic “colonization,” which destroyed the Southern industries and banks to fund growth in the North. In addition, Southern backwardness derived from its post-feudalistic status. Notwithstanding its abolition in 1806 by Giuseppe di Buonaparte (1768-1844), feudalism had left significant legacies in the South, including an agricultural economy tied to the *latifondi* and demarcated social divisions.<sup>14</sup> Backwardness was thus also interpreted as a cause of lack of industries, unequal distribution of public and private funds, low public education, and partisan laws.<sup>15</sup>

It was in this climate that a prevalent narrative of the Italian governing class developed. The ruling elites saw the Northern regions as industrialized and liberal, and charged the Italian South, the *Mezzogiorno*, with historical poverty and economic backwardness. These claims were linked to the very nature of Southern society, characterized by criminality, clientelistic politics, and superstition, almost in resistance to “civilization.” At the time of Unification, these features were perceived as irreconcilable with the industrial capitalist society of the North, which was intrinsically more rational and regulated.<sup>16</sup> The regional dualism, however, was perhaps more

---

<sup>13</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, 11.; Marta Petrusiewicz, “Before the Southern Question: “Native” Ideas on Backwardness and Remedies in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1815-1849,” in *Italy’s “Southern Question,” Orientalism in One Country*, ed. Jane Schneider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 27.

<sup>14</sup> The *latifondi* were large landed estates that had hegemony over other territories. They constituted the core of the system of *latifondismo*, whereby the landowning elites held social, political, and economic power, which granted them access to State patronage after Unification and several other privileges. The *latifondi* were generally worked by the peasantry in exchange for protection. Jonathan Morris, “Challenging Meridionalismo: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy,” in *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, ed. Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Petrusiewicz, “Before the Southern Question,” 40.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Schneider, “Introduction: The Dynamics of Neo-Orientalism in Italy (1848-1895),” in *Italy’s “Southern*

economic than social in presenting a working class consciousness between the Northern and Southern peasantry, insofar as a large share of Northern society also belonged to the peasant class. Ultimately, although the Southern peasantry did have different objectives from the industrialist Northerners, they also showed similar political agency as exemplified by the cases of the Matese.

### **Economy and Society in Pre-Unification South**

The history of the South followed an independent narrative of modernization. The Kingdom of Naples obtained its independence from the Spanish crown in 1738. The kings Charles (1716-1788) and Ferdinand I of Bourbon (1751-1825) carried out several reforms to redesign the structures of the new State and cultivate its wealth. The Minister Bernardo Tanucci (1698-1783) reformed the cadastre (real estate agency), and created the *annona* (ration) system, whereby the State controlled the prices of basic foodstuffs. He also made a private Concordat with the Pope in 1734 to limit the jurisdictions of the local bishops, and established a *Cassa Sacra* for redistributing Church's lands and wealth and curtailing baronial privileges, therefore encouraging private entrepreneurship.<sup>17</sup> Although these efforts did not greatly improve the economic poverty, which was, *mutatis mutandi*, common to most of Europe, the independent Kingdom of Naples modernized notably. A constitution and parliament were granted in 1820 despite Ferdinand's fear of Italian repercussions of the French Revolution.<sup>18</sup>

Ferdinand's successors continued the trend of modernization. His grandson Ferdinand II (1810-1859) financed the first ever Italian railroad, the Napoli-Portici railway (1839), and

---

*Question.* " *Orientalism in One Country*, ed. Jane Schenider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Petruszewicz, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Petruszewicz, 30.

sponsored the building of similar infrastructures in the Kingdom. He also helped the growing local industries by applying tariffs favorable to the exports of raw wool, cotton, silk, hemp, flax, and olive oil, which were entirely produced in the South. Under the reign of Ferdinand, Naples became an important cultural center in Italy with the emergence of private schools and private patronage of the arts.<sup>19</sup> Politics was fervent, and in 1848 revolutions sparked in Naples and Sicily, mirroring the general activism in Europe. Ferdinand II surprisingly granted a new constitution, reorganized the parliament, and carried out significant reforms, including the institution of schools in the provinces. However, following new uprisings on 15 May 1848, Ferdinand II became increasingly authoritarian. He enacted the *spergiuro* (perjury), whereby he abandoned the constitution and dissolved parliament. In addition, his troops carried out mass arrests, deportations, and assassinations.<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding the revolutionary climate that was general across Italy by 1848, considering that the First War of Independence (1848-9) against Austria-Hungary was happening in the North, Ferdinand II politically isolated the South through a series of repressive measures. Reforms were no longer enacted and private entrepreneurship was hindered by redirecting the funds from the industries to the army. Intellectuals were imprisoned or exiled and were forced to renounce affiliation to any secret society. Many of these exiles became members of Garibaldi's expeditions or emigrated North or abroad to continue their activities.<sup>21</sup> The repressive measures of 1848 became decisive in the development of the Southern Question, insofar as the arrests, terror, censorship, and police rule hindered any cultural development of the South. In addition, issues of public health, economic stagnation, and rural poverty were disregarded in favor of the more urgent concern of annihilating of the opposition. Hence, the social capital of the South was

---

<sup>19</sup> Petruszewicz, 32-3.

<sup>20</sup> Petruszewicz, 42-3.

<sup>21</sup> Petruszewicz, 44-5.

reduced both through the attack on the intellectual élite and the negligence of the ruling class towards the peasantry.

### **Post-Unification South Through the Eyes of the Elites**

After Unification was officialized in 1861, politician Massimo d’Azeglio (1798-1866) notoriously said, “We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians.” The new Italian State acknowledged the enormous differences between the North and South of Italy, and was determined to unify the country socially as well as politically. Despite the social impoverishment created under Ferdinand II, the Southern peasantry remained a central actor in the scheme of Unification. The autonomous pursuance of its parliamentary interests, which were neglected by the State, allowed the Southern peasant class to show its political consciousness in challenging the “backward” stereotype that worked to the North’s self-interest.<sup>22</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of Unification, a new intellectual trend advocated by Southern thinkers became particularly influential. Through the public discourse of *Meridionalismo*, which analyzed the conditions of the South from a socio-economic perspective, a new analytical framework for theorizing the South was established. Among the Meridionalist intellectuals, the Neapolitan Pasquale Villari, later nicknamed the “revered master of the Southern Question,” shaped the public opinion through his *Lettere Meridionali*. The *Lettere*, published in 1875 in *L’Opinione*, an influential journal close to the Historic Right, were a polemic against the liberal elites who had directed the Unification process. Villari was

---

<sup>22</sup> To this end, it must be noted that until 1881 franchise was limited to upper class male citizens of twenty-five years of age. Although franchise was extended to the middle classes in 1881, universal manhood suffrage was introduced only in 1918. Franco Savelli, “Il Meridione d’Italia,” *Storiologia.it*, 2017.

discontented with the contemporary Italian State and society, and criticized its governing class as too distant from the people and the problems of Southern Italy.<sup>23</sup>

In his *Letters*, Villari presented an investigation “into the poorest classes, especially in the southern provinces.” He maintained that the South had a peculiar nature which separated it from the rest of Italy, but that, however, shared with the nation the “ill” of poverty, for instance widespread in the Alpine regions. According to Villari, the resolution of the Southern Question rested with the Southern elites, as they only could mediate with the Northern governing class.<sup>24</sup> In fact, Southern elites occupied an intermediate position between the two regions of Italy, as the governing classes of the North and the South combined in the national institutions. Multiple Southern figures were called in as members of the unitary government, including Villari himself, elected Minister of Education in 1891, and the socialist Francesco Saverio Merlino, who was involved in the Processo di Benevento for the *Banda del Matese*. These personalities contributed to the understanding of the Southern Question by launching a scientific analysis and inaugurating a new intellectual function of the writer as a social documentarist, who explained to the North the conditions of the South.<sup>25</sup>

Within this cultural discourse, a particularly significant sociological study in the South was carried out by Tuscan authors and politicians Sidney Sonnino and Leopoldo Franchetti in 1876. Their *La Sicilia nel 1876* was the result of the authors’ journey through Sicily, where they experienced first-hand the Southern problem. The volume generally follows a sociological narrative. It describes the local ruling class as composed of people who are “ruthless in the struggle for power,” “quick to take offense,” and “ferocious in vendettas.” According to

---

<sup>23</sup> Nelson Moe, “The Emergence of the Southern Question in Villari, Franchetti, and Sonnino,” in *Italy’s Southern Question*, ed. Jane Schneider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 52-3.

<sup>24</sup> Pasquale Villari, *Lettere Meridionali*, cited in Moe, “The Emergence of the Southern Question,” 59.

<sup>25</sup> Moe, “The Emergence of the Southern Question,” 61.

Franchetti and Sonnino, the peasants lived in conditions similar to slaves, while mafiosi and brigands marauded the island making a mockery of the law enforcement agents who were like “an army encamped in a hostile country.”<sup>26</sup> These descriptions conflicted with the idealized countryside and bountiful nature of the South, and contributed to the portrayal of the South as a mystic and cursed land.

However, various passages within the report are highly romanticized. For instance, the authors describe their feeling of “profound isolation” that overcame them upon their arrival in Sicily due to the presence of “some mysterious and malicious power.”<sup>27</sup> Franchetti finally observed:

The coexistence of Sicilian civilization and that of Central and Northern Italy in the same nation is incompatible with the prosperity of the nation and, in the long run, with its very existence, for it produces a weakness that renders it vulnerable to disintegration at the slightest push from outside. One of these two civilizations must therefore disappear [...] and we believe that for any Sicilian of good faith and moderate intelligence there can be no doubt as to which of the two must make room for the other.<sup>28</sup>

Through these words, as it was the case with several other accounts, reality and representation merged to create a South shaped by the prejudiced language used for its description. The South thus became a subliminal environment, associated with both hell and paradise.<sup>29</sup>

Similar dramatic descriptions dominated public discourse across the country. The South was described as devoid of political valence in comparison to the highly “civilized” Northern

---

<sup>26</sup> These accounts also constituted the first descriptions of the *mafia* and brought national attention to this issue as well. Moe, 61.

<sup>27</sup> Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino, *La Sicilia nel 1876*, cited in Moe, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Franchetti and Sonnino, cited in Moe, 68.

<sup>29</sup> Gabriella Gribaudo, “Images of the South - the Mezzogiorno as Seen by Insiders and Outsiders,” in *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, ed. Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 84.

bourgeoisie. Its cultural features were valorized only when referred to the region's Greek and Roman past, whereas the rest of its history was a "dark age" whose worst moment arrived with the Bourbons.<sup>30</sup> In addition, its geographical boundaries were conflated with the boundaries of perceived "civilization." These were clearly defined in popular culture from Naples to Sicily, as Creuze de Lesser wrote in 1806 and Carlo Levi reiterated a century later in his novel *Christ stopped at Eboli*. Just as Franchetti and Sonnino considered "fangs and claws" as necessary for surviving in Sicily, Northern commentators, scientists, and politicians of the time also viewed the "barbarity" of the Southerners a primary obstacle to Italy's modernization.

This explicitly colonial discourse emerged partly from the need of the new Italian State to affirm its political legitimacy over a region which considered it a "foreign" institution.<sup>31</sup> By insisting on these narratives of barbarism and cultural laziness, the governing class singled out the Southern peasantry as incompatible with the modern Northern and European civilizations. The social fragmentation produced by these narratives was corroborated by the informal political agreements and clientelism that came to characterize the relationship of the government with the Southern elites. In the 1870s, during the government of the Historic Left of Agostino Depretis, Southern elites became critical to sustain political stability, insofar as the North was agitated by working-class protests. The legitimization of the government was obtained through the politics of *trasformismo*, whereby opposition parties were induced to shift their votes to the government majority in exchange for personal favors and access to state patronage.<sup>32</sup>

*Trasformismo* adopted the intimate style of politics typical of Southern society, and proved crucial for the State to assert its power over a region unwilling to accept it politically.

---

<sup>30</sup> Gribaudi, "Images of the South," 85.

<sup>31</sup> Gribaudi, 89.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Chubb, *Patronage, Power, & Poverty in Southern Italy: A Tale of Two Cities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 17-21.

However, as it entailed the State alignment of interests with the Southern elites, it left the peasantry ill equipped to influence economic policies and protect its collective interests.<sup>33</sup> As Gramsci argued, social division and cultural incohesion had become the evils of the country. They had prevented the government from enacting the right policies and thus winning over the Southern peasantry. Indeed, the Southern masses became increasingly regarded as apolitical and essentially irrelevant to the modernization that the government intended to implement.<sup>34</sup> In light of this, the exercise of political will by the peasantry in the form of brigandage – and later in their unresponsiveness to alternative institutions as it was in the Matese anarchist attempt – can be read as a much more complex issue.

The narrative of the Southern peasants' political passivity that emerged through the colonialist discourse and mechanisms of Northern government, was increasingly invalidated. Here, brigandage expressed a violent exercise of political agency, much in the same way as the "indifference" towards the Matese anarchists. These actions cast into question Gramsci's claims of inability by the Southern peasantry to push forward its political agenda. As we will see, the reasons behind the political interest – or disinterest – of the peasants vis à vis brigandage and anarchy differed according to exogenous factors such as government policies. However, it soon became clear that after Unification the Southern masses had sharpened their sense of political consciousness. Moreover, they put it into practice in a much more rational way than any of the Northern narratives could have envisioned, for they carefully picked their fights. The South's

---

<sup>33</sup>John A. Davis, "Casting Off the Southern Problem: or the Peculiarities of the South Reconsidered," in *Italy's "Southern Question."* *Orientalism in One Country*, ed. Jane Schneider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 219.

<sup>34</sup>Nadia Urbinati, "The South of Antonio Gramsci and the Concept of Development," in *Italy's "Southern Question."* *Orientalism in One Country*, ed. Jane Schneider (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 140.

new political activity ultimately bewildered the governing elites, who were left with only military force and bureaucracy in attempting to impose political order in the South.<sup>35</sup>

### **Governmental measures**

To better illustrate the nature of the political activism of the Southern peasantry, it is necessary to recognize the policies that the new State carried out in the South. The sociological studies and popular narratives that exaggerated the inherent backwardness of the South eventually influenced the government's policies. Since Unification, the government acknowledged the problem of the South, but considered modernization its priority vis à vis the rest of Europe. As Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour remarked in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 25 May 1861, the Italian economy was still embryonic and needed the support of the government to flourish.<sup>36</sup> Cavour maintained that in the North industrial protection and investment capital had allowed the industry to develop. The Italian government had fostered the industrial capacities of the North by developing manufacturing industries and infrastructure. On the other hand, the Southern regional economy was based primarily on agriculture, and modernization could only be achieved starting from this sector. However, although it insisted on the need for modernization, in the first ten years after Unification, the government invested less than ten million lire in agricultural machinery, preferring instead to finance infrastructures such as roads and railroads. Gross investments in the modernization of agriculture in the decade 1871-

---

<sup>35</sup> Urbinati, "The South of Antonio Gramsci," 140.

<sup>36</sup> Giano Accame, Giusto Benedetti, Giorgio Carlevaro et al., *Annali dell'Economia Italiana* (Milano: Istituto IPSOA, 1985), 102-3.

80 were even less, amounting to about 3% of the total investment. As a result, peasants in the South were left with rudimentary tools and techniques, and agriculture faltered behind.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, as one its first acts, the government imposed a uniform tariff to foster free trade with the rest of Europe and balance the government's budget. Cavour was among the supporters of this homologation, as he believed it to be beneficial for the national economy. However, the measure was highly criticized. For instance, the deputy Giuseppe Polsinelli, in response to Cavour's aforementioned speech about modernization, criticized the lack of preventive measures for the small producers of the South, who were put in a situation of impossible competitiveness with foreign producers.<sup>38</sup> Although tariff unification was intended to help exports as a whole, in the South it resulted in less protection for industry, as the prices for exports increased and those for imports decreased. Without protectionism, the already weak Southern industries were supplanted by the Northern ones, which were more modern and efficient. Naples' steel industry was replaced by Genoa's, and the cotton mills of Salerno by those in Liguria and Lombardy.<sup>39</sup> The heavier burden on the Southern population and the higher economic competition drained the Southern resources, and ultimately caused the industries to shrink even further.

The real problem of the Southern economy, however, was the need for an agrarian reform. The governments of the Historic Right and the Historic Left that rose to power after Cavour's death promised an agrarian reform aimed at subdividing the *latifondi*. On 7 July 1866, the government passed a law allowing the partition and use of ecclesiastical lands for public commerce. This law involved the distribution of about 500 thousand hectares of land to peasants in the form of landed estates ranging from one to three hectares. The law, however, proved

---

<sup>37</sup> Accame, Benedetti, Carlevaro et al., *Annali dell'Economia Italiana*, 110.

<sup>38</sup> Accame, Benedetti, Carlevaro et al., 110-1.

<sup>39</sup> Savelli, "Il Meridione d'Italia."

insufficient to revitalize the depressed Southern economy due to the lack of investment capital. Peasants resold their estates to the owners of the *latifondi* – usually to pay their journey to the New World – and the land lots became increasingly smaller and unproductive.<sup>40</sup>

Between 1861 and 1862, the fiscal regime of Piedmont was extended to the whole peninsula. Taxes were levied on stamp and registration duties, liens, tithes to the government and railway usage. In the following decade, the tax collection revenue augmented from 8% to 14%, almost doubling tax import to the State revenues from 6.96% to 11.38%.<sup>41</sup> In many areas of the South property taxes increased to the 40% of the value of the property. All of these measures burdened the peasantry, whose already scarce income was exhausted in State duties. For the South, the Italian fiscal system was much harsher than the one established by the Bourbons. This increment in tax collection ultimately produced discontent among the Southern populations, who began to distrust the government and rebel against it.

Finally, in 1869, the government imposed the infamous *tassa sul macinato*, also called the “tax on hunger,” which especially afflicted the South. The tax was an indirect tax levied on the quantity of the ground products including grain, wheat, and other cereals. Grain was the most expensive, with a tax of two lire per quintal of grain produced. The aim of the tax was to contribute to the rebalancing of the government's reserves.<sup>42</sup> To this end, an increment of 20% was also imposed on the existing tariff on the import of cereals. For the average citizen, the tax

---

<sup>40</sup> Savelli, “Il Meridione d’Italia.”

<sup>41</sup> Ada Labanca, “Realtà Sociale e Dissensi Popolari nel Molise del Secondo Ottocento,” in *Movimenti Sociali e Lotte Politiche nell’Italia Liberale: Il Moto Anarchico del Matese*, ed. Luigi Parente (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001), 195.

<sup>42</sup> After Unification, the Italian government was highly indebted owing to the wars of Unification and to the building of industries and infrastructure. The budget deficit in 1870 was estimated to be slightly lower than 200 million lire, which the Minister Quintino Sella decided to solve by printing more money, thus depreciating its value, and by imposing new indirect taxes (direct taxes would have further exacerbated the problem of tax evasion). The budget deficit was too wide for a nation as young and underdeveloped as Italy, which could not sustain more spending without incurring bankruptcy. Therefore, the government made of the budget balance its priority. In 1876, this balance was reached thanks to the tax on grain, , among other things. Savelli, “Il Meridione d’Italia.”

had the effect of raising the cost of productions of cereals and of cereal-based goods. The cost of bread rose dramatically, and it remained higher even after the abolition of the tax in 1884, under the government of Agostino De Pretis and the Historic Left. Ultimately, the *tassa sul macinato*, along with the previous taxes and the failed agrarian reforms, sapped the Southern peasantry. The significant economic gap between the North and the South was further stretched to an irremediable level. This economic inequality, enhanced by the social prejudices that divided the nation, served as a catalyst for the Southern uprisings of the 1860s-70s.

Overall, it is difficult to assess the real quality of governance of the new Italian State in the South, especially if compared to their Bourbon predecessors. The social and economic inequality between the North and the South at the time of Unification were relatively minor. Poverty was a nation-wide issue, and the Italian peasantry suffered equally from high taxation and land eviction. Similarly, the social and cultural capitals of each region concentrated in the few urban centers, such as Naples or Turin. The pattern of divergence that characterized the Southern Question was set after 1861 following the rapid industrialization of the Northern regions to the detriment of Southern economy. Due to the strong agricultural component, which made its economy less stable, the Southern peasantry suffered greater from the higher taxation and the irregular land redistribution enacted by the Italian State. The awareness of the limits of the Unification itself and a disillusionment with the leading classes gave birth in the South to a “nostalgia” for the Bourbon rule, which was seen as offering greater social protection and a sense of belonging.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the Bourbon monarchy represented the “old regime” and traditions that had characterized the South for centuries, and to which the peasantry was likely accustomed. As we will see, the failure to redistribute the lands and the dismantlement of the armies by the Italian State, in contrast to the Bourbon monarchy’s open sponsorship of peasant rebellions,

---

<sup>43</sup> Urbinati, “The South of Antonio Gramsci,” 135.

arguably led towards the creation of a political motivation behind brigandage and the uprisings of the Matese.

### **The Southern Question in the Matese and the Terra di Lavoro Province**

Although the unification of Italy was made in the name of centralism, it resulted in a deeper divide among its lands and its people. As the Meridionalists argued, poverty and ignorance made Southern society incapable of defending itself against the predatory actions of the Northern ruling class. In addition, the government proved incapable of contrasting Southern “backwardness.” This thesis will focus on the area of the Matese, in the region of Campania, and discuss the developments of the Southern Question in the area vis à vis the subsequent rebellions of the peasantry. The importance of the Matese within the history of Italian Unification resides in its active peasantry. The area had a history of local rebellions already since the sixteenth century, and was also identified by the International anarchists as an ideal place for social revolution due to its poverty. In fact, although Campania was the richest region of the South with the highest concentration of urban population, the Matese remained its poorest territory. Between the 1860s-1870s brigands and political insurgents marauded the Matese mountains attempting to engage the local peasantry in an act of rebellion against the unified State, and ultimately rewriting the narrative of political apathy of the South.

In the 1860s, Campania was administratively divided into the territories of Terra di Lavoro, Principato Citra, and Principato Ultra, all of which were separately considered as “Southern provinces.” Already in the 18th century, the majority of the population, around 65-70% of the Campani, lived close to Naples. Naples acted as the gravitational center for the social and economic life of the region, whereas small villages and towns only existed far removed from

the city. Part of the Terra di Lavoro province, where the Matese was located, extended in the semi-urbanized area although it maintained a primarily agricultural economy, centered around the production of grains. As Nicola Onorati wrote in his second edition of “Delle Cose Rustiche” in 1804, the average profits for grain harvests was 17 ducats per seasonal harvest, compared to the medium rents for land, which ranged from 40 to 60 ducats based on the estates’ closeness to Naples. This data highlights the high average cost of life for the peasantry. Although Onorati focused on the area of Torre Annunziata, it is safe to assume that the numbers were similar in the Matese due to the similar geographical composition and population density.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Nicola Onorati, “Delle Cose Rustiche,” cited in Pasquale Villani and Paolo Macry, *Storia d’Italia. Le Regioni IX: Campania* (Milano: Einaudi, 1990), 20.



Figure 1: Terra di Lavoro

Source: Antonio Grifa, *Il Brigantaggio Meridionale nella Stampa Clericale e Moderata*, Tesi di Laurea, (Padova: Università degli Studi di Padova, 2008).

The Terra di Lavoro was generally slightly richer than other provinces in Campania due to its closeness to Naples and its extensive agriculture. However, although the peasants were more autonomous and enfranchised than in other parts of the South, they remained subjected to the feudal class system. Furthermore, the process of land liquidation established by the agrarian reform involved 60,000 hectares of land, distributed in 20,000 lots of about 3 hectares. The larger availability of cultivable land created further disputes regarding the parameters of redistribution. The lands were mostly managed and rebought by the landowners and middle class merchants to the disadvantage of the rural classes, whose only interaction with the landowners

was at the moment of paying rent. Therefore, the net social and economic distinction between the rich landowners and the peasants remained, causing agriculture to remain underdeveloped and the social system to stagnate.<sup>45</sup>

The first twenty years after Unification were challenging to Campania as a whole because of the institutional and administrative novelties, as well as the market changes that hindered the industry's competitiveness vis à vis the rest of Italy. Within the Terra di Lavoro province, the area of the Matese was the poorest both socially and economically. The Matese was mountainous and generally geographically isolated. Together with agriculture, the primary form of income for the locals was the wool industry, which was highly territorial and therefore inflexible in terms of export. In addition, following Unification, the Matese experienced high levels of emigration diminishing the already scarce population. If the lower population alleviated the pressure on resources, it also reduced the human capital of the area, which caused the economy to remain generally underdeveloped. Ultimately, the area remained isolated and depressed even after Unification, and discontent emerged in the local population and paving the way for future resistance.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, the scarce social capital of the area was concentrated with the political élite. The Terra di Lavoro élite was poorer than that in other provinces, as it was made primarily of landowners from various social classes, modest *rentiers*, and traders. This composition of landowners and professionals contrasted with the average political class of Northern and Central Italy made mostly of bourgeois entrepreneurs, bankers, industrials, public employees, and salesmen.<sup>47</sup> The rural political elites in Terra di Lavoro were thus unfamiliar with the needs of the lower classes and had different interests from those of the peasantry, such as the maintenance

---

<sup>45</sup> Villani and Macry, *Storia d'Italia*, 28-30.

<sup>46</sup> Villani and Macry, 118, 229.

<sup>47</sup> Villani and Macry, 150-1.

of their estates and social position. These prerogatives clearly contrasted with those of the poorest class.

Even when these rights expanded to include other professionals such as artisans, the Southern elites maintained behaviors of electoral corruption and administrative misgovernment, creating a conflict of interests that negatively affected the social capital development of the region.<sup>48</sup> For instance, literacy remained extremely low. According to 1871 statistics, 80% of the population of the Terra di Lavoro was illiterate, and remained so well into the twentieth century. The landowners continued to be the only elected officials, while the working class and the peasantry continued to make up the majority of the electorate.<sup>49</sup> Hence, as it was the case in most of the South, in Terra di Lavoro the political and administrative powers remained in the hands of the rich, while for the lower classes social mobility was impossible and disfavored.

Despite the slightly greater wealth of Campania, the Southern Question ultimately affected it in similar ways as other regions of the South, most notably the neighboring Basilicata. Due to its geographical isolation and underdeveloped industries, the Matese experienced high levels of poverty. Following Unification, the area saw high levels of depopulation and a further economic impoverishment due to the opening of industries in the North. Also, the building of the Napoli-Avellino-Foggia railway in 1870 opened new commerce routes in the region but cut off the Terra di Lavoro from the main industrial activities. The problem of land was equally unsuccessful, insofar as the inequality between peasants and landowners remained static both in terms of wealth and of political power. The social conditions of the peasants continued to be unfavorable and problematic with regards to their economic and political enfranchisement. Neither the national, nor the local governments enacted policies for the growth of the peasantry

---

<sup>48</sup> Villani and Macry, 145.

<sup>49</sup> Villani and Macry, 180.

in the South, which ultimately had no choice but to rebel to push forward its political agenda.

The Matese proved to be an ideal place for Southern rebels and anarchists to start a revolution.

Neither of the two revolts was successful. However, they spoke to the conditions of the peasantry

not only as an underprivileged class, but also as a social group with political agency and

consciousness.

### 3. Post-Unification Brigandage: Political Modern Jacquerie?

On 11 November 1860, King Victor Emmanuel II (1820-1878) issued a decree regulating the admission of volunteers to the Royal Army. The various commissions appointed by the King were made up of high ranking officials from both the Sardinian Army and the Garibaldian army.<sup>50</sup> The principal commission coordinated by the Piedmontese General Enrico Della Rocca (1807-1897) did not work properly due to organizational setbacks; however, other commissions executed a tough selection in the South. One such commission was the one led by Colonel Genova di Revel (1817-1910), which scrutinized troops from the Garibaldian army. The Garibaldian Army had approximately 60,000 recruits, of which three fifths were Southern volunteers. It had grown because of the zealous recruitment by liberal groups, made up of the provincial bourgeoisie. The most prominent figures within this army were Southern volunteers, who often led irregular corps. Revel believed that from the 60,000 troops of the Army only 20,000 men were truly interested in the Unitary cause, whereas the irregulars had joined purely for mercenary reasons. The way in which he established this distinction corresponded to his selection method of men chosen according to the possession of regular documentation, which Southerners did not have. This consequently led to a large-scale discrimination against Southern volunteers.<sup>51</sup>

Revel's method ultimately fragmented the "Southern Army," and forced many of its members to return home. The dismantlement of the Bourbon army produced similar results.

---

<sup>50</sup> The two armies were joined following the royal decree of 4 May 1861. The decree issued a new denomination for the Royal Army, whose name changed from *Armata Sarda* (Sardinian Army) to *Esercito Italiano* (Italian Army). Franco Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio* (Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1964), 23.

<sup>51</sup> Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 24-5.

Thousands of soldiers had returned home after the war, whereas others were incorporated in the *Armata Sarda*. Here too the policy for recruitment was discriminatory: while generals were allowed to rejoin the Italian army and retain their ranks, the majority of the soldiers were simply dismissed. However, most of the generals and the troops refused to serve the Italian Army and instead remained loyal to the Bourbon House. This issue became critical later in 1860, when the Italian state proclaimed forced conscription and obliged the men who served between 1857 and 1869 to reenlist in the army by 31 January 1861. The official estimates were around 72,000 reenlistments; however, despite the extension of the deadline to 1 June 1861, only 20,000 men had reenlisted. The majority of the Southern recruits had fled conscription and joined the armed resistance in the mountains.<sup>52</sup>

The politics of the moderate government vis à vis the army had caused discontent among the Southern masses, and allowed armed resistance to spread rapidly. The first uprisings against the “Piedmontese invader” were set in motion after the nullification of the decree of 2 June 1860, under which Garibaldi had declared the repartition of lands among the Southern peasants. By January 1861, even before Unification was formalized, the Italian government was already aware of the rebel groups in the South and alarmed by the threat of a general insurrection. Thus, it quickly mobilized the army southward to contrast the growing brigand bands, whose numbers and strength posed a danger to the State. The local rebellions were in part supported by the Bourbon monarchy, which overtly provided military intelligence and deployable troops.<sup>53</sup> While

---

<sup>52</sup> Molfese, 31-2.

<sup>53</sup> The Bourbon monarchy had fled to Rome after their defeat during the siege of Gaeta (1860-1). The monarchy officially capitulated; however, it remained active in organizing a counter-revolution. In Paris, Bourbon ambassador Giuseppe Canofari (1790-1872) set up an international organization with other diplomatic officers, former Army officers, and Southern loyalists. Active in Switzerland and Austria, the organization began recruiting volunteers and raising funds for a major expedition in the South. A famous example of the Bourbon support to the Brigand wars was General Jose Borges (1813-1861), veteran of the Carlist wars and strict collaborator of the brigand Carmine Crocco in Basilicata. Like Borges, many generals led troops across the Southern countryside and occupied towns in the name of the Bourbon monarchy. This was the case in Tagliacozzo in Abruzzo, where on 13 January 1861 the

the rulers of the new Italy and their sympathizers in Europe considered brigandage another example of common criminality typical of the South, the supporters of the Bourbon monarchy saw themselves as legitimate defenders of the State. Encouraged by this legitimist resistance, the illiterate Southern peasantry, stuck in economic underdevelopment and highly influenced by the anti-government clergy, grew closer to the Bourbons, who embodied the old regime and therefore their traditional way of life.

The rebellions of the *Grande Brigantaggio* involved large sections of the population, most of which joined voluntarily. Peasants, men fleeing from conscription, ex Garibaldian generals, Bourbon supporters, mercenaries hired by the Church, and women, called *drude* (“loyal”), all took part in the resistance. The brigands generally adopted a guerrilla warfare, hiding in the mountains and occasionally descending to pillage villages and set fire to State buildings and documents. They also often kidnapped wealthy individuals and demanded ransoms in exchange. They collaborated with the bailiff, the *fattore di campagna*, who was the local connection between them and the peasants. Eventually, brigands established a *modus vivendi* and structured their organization to include a commissariat, an alternative police, a treasurer, secretary, and sometimes a priest.<sup>54</sup>

Brigandage was most widespread in Campania, Basilicata, Apulia, and Calabria, whereas in Sicily it was generally absent or substituted by the mafia.<sup>55</sup> On the whole, brigandage had a tremendous impact on the political authority of the Italian State, which was able to eliminate it only through a de facto military occupation, deploying over 100,000 troops in the

---

General Francesco Saverio Luvarà (1827-1809) led the occupation of the town as part of a larger plan of mobilization in the areas of Terra di Lavoro and Abruzzi. Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 53-4. Simon Sarlin, “Fighting the Risorgimento: Foreign Volunteers in Southern Italy (1860–63),” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2009), 479.

<sup>54</sup> S. Merlino, “Camorra, Maffia and Brigandage,” *Political Science Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1894), 484.

<sup>55</sup> Merlino, “Camorra, Maffia and Brigandage,” 467.

course of five years. In fact, brigandage eventually acquired such popularity that scholars estimated that approximately 80,000 Southern men were involved in the years between 1861 and 1865.<sup>56</sup> The turning point in the history of Southern brigandage came with the *Legge Pica* of 1863, created purposefully to eliminate the phenomenon. The law allowed the national Army to use martial law on any suspect of brigandism, and established the formation of retributed Volunteers Corps to deploy against brigands.<sup>57</sup> In 1865, the Pica Law was substituted by the *Legge Peruzzi*, which also allowed for a reduction of the penalty for the brigands who would turn themselves in.<sup>58</sup> Due to the magnitude of the phenomenon and the military nature of the repression, “the brigand wars” have often been regarded as civil wars, both by nineteenth century commentators and contemporary historians. This “civil war” ultimately only exacerbated the poor conditions of the South and deepened the regional divide of the nation.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> The total population of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was approximately nine million people. Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 159.

<sup>57</sup> Giovanni de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento. Legittimisti e Briganti tra i Borbone e i Savoia*. (Naples: Alfredo Guida Editore, 2000), 266-7.

<sup>58</sup> de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento*, 267.

<sup>59</sup> Beales and Biagini, *The Risorgimento*, 159.



Figure 2: Brigandage in Southern Italy

Source: Antonio Grifa, *Il Brigantaggio Meridionale nella Stampa Clericale e Moderata*, Tesi di Laurea, (Padova: Università degli Studi di Padova, 2008).

## The Nature of Brigandage

Defining a political philosophy of brigandage is problematic because of its criminal activities. Nineteenth century ruling elites and public discourse generally stripped brigandage of any political value, and treated it as rural criminality. For the governing class, the agrarian question came to epitomize the problems of the South. Ruling elites developed a natural correlation between Southern rebellions and the agrarian question, reducing brigandage to a purely social problem. The definition of brigandage given by the Parliamentary Commission in 1863 exemplifies this idea in expressing the opinions of Southern liberal elites, who believed that

the Bourbon House and the clergy were trying to “carry out restoration [of their powers] by means of a social war, heightening the passions and the resentments of the poor against the rich, of the proletariat against the landowners.”<sup>60</sup> Although the reference to the Bourbon monarchy seems to politicize brigandage in the eyes of the governing class, it only served to present it as a more dangerous phenomenon. The prevalence of the social aspect of brigandage reemerges in their solutions to the problem, which included the reordering of public administration, the adoption of an extraordinary repressive legislation, and a new process of redistribution of State land.<sup>61</sup>

The press at the time contributed to the publicization of brigandage as purely criminal. In 1861, the newspaper “La Perseveranza,” argued that “the insurrections have nothing of seriously political, and they will soon end under the firm repression of military authority.”<sup>62</sup> “L’Opinione,” in response to an investigation in Sicily carried out by “La Monarchia Italiana” about a potential military siege on the island, reported on the rebellious nature of the peasants, writing: “do you perhaps think that once the siege occurs, and the disarmament of the population is declared, and the individual allowances are suspended, those sad people will stop being such, and not wage war against our society for fear of breaking one more law, they who already infringe upon those most severe and sacrosanct?”<sup>63</sup> Due to their belligerent character, both brigands and peasants, therefore became a threat to the Italian State.

The equation peasant-brigand served the purpose of the ruling elites, for this oversimplification made it easy to identify and attack the enemy. However, although the majority

---

<sup>60</sup> Alessandro Capone, “Il Brigantaggio Meridionale: Una Rassegna Storiografica,” *Le Carte e la Storia*, no 2 (2015), 32.

<sup>61</sup> Capone, “Il Brigantaggio Meridionale,” 32.

<sup>62</sup> *La Perseveranza*, cited in Antonio Grifa, “Il Brigantaggio Meridionale nella Stampa Clericale e Moderata,” Università degli Studi di Padova (2008), 60. Translation done by the author. All subsequent translations are done by the author unless otherwise specified.

<sup>63</sup> *L’Opinione*, cited in Grifa, “Il Brigantaggio Meridionale,” 64.

of brigands were from the peasant class, the relationship between brigands and the local populations was more complex. Saverio Merlino in his “Camorra, Maffia, and Brigandage,” claimed that “the brigand’s general policy in reference to the population in which he plied his vocation varied according to the circumstances.”<sup>64</sup> Generally speaking, in the early years of brigandage, 1861-63, the brigands had mass support from the peasants. They would attack the landlords and force them to make concessions to the poor, both in money and land use. Brigands would also threaten them into recompensing the local girls whom they had raped, which was a particularly widespread and problematic issue. Brigands would also distribute their loot among the peasantry, join them for land occupations, procure “volunteers” to substitute those in the army, and help them repay their usurers.<sup>65</sup> These actions contributed to the growth and popularity of brigandage among the lower classes. Peasants formally pledged allegiance to the bands, which grew in numbers to the thousands, as it was the case for Crocco’s band in Basilicata.<sup>66</sup>

After 1863, however, State repression and the competition among bands determined a shift in the brigand policy towards the peasantry. Increasingly more people chose to collaborate with the State in exchange for money, and the brigands themselves resorted to greater violence to intimidate the peasants. In some instances, brigands also collaborated with the local landlords to defend the property of their patrons in exchange for weapons and information about the movements of the State troops. Brigands and peasants eventually stopped collaborating. Partly through the help of the landlords, brigandage assumed the character of a military organization and became a real power in the State. Conversely, the peasantry was gradually alienated and eventually rejected brigandage as a strategy of resistance, choosing to instead cooperate with the “invader” they once loathed.

---

<sup>64</sup> Merlino, "Camorra, Maffia and Brigandage," 483.

<sup>65</sup> Merlino, 483.

<sup>66</sup> Merlino, 483.

In light of this, brigandage can be theorized as a political phenomenon emerged from peasant legitimism. In the words of Franco Molfese, brigandage was “a movement of protest elevated to crude class struggle, from an undeveloped peasant class in the context of a generally undeveloped society.”<sup>67</sup> For him, the political direction of brigandage and its social character converged, as the peasantry continued to struggle towards achieving its “class objectives” of obtaining land redistribution and seizing the evicted estates. Although the redistribution of land was not at the heart of the political objectives of brigandage, it had an important role in provoking the first insurrections of 1860-1 and in bringing consensus to the bands.<sup>68</sup> The failed resolution to this agrarian question determined the anarchist-like protest of the peasantry, who joined the brigand bands as the only way to reclaim what had been promised to them.

Brigandage began as a popular movement in direct response to the absence of the Italian State. In the South, brigands supplanted the State as bearers of justice, and as such attracted both the local landlords, who used them to carry out personal justice, and the peasantry, who saw in them their “local heroes”.<sup>69</sup> This popular struggle was exploited by the Bourbons and the clergy, who further politicized the issue playing on the existing hostility towards liberal Italy expressed as a pro-Bourbon rebellion.<sup>70</sup> Despite the obviously anti-political nature of certain petty criminals and convicts in the brigand ranks, several brigands had been military generals both for the Bourbons and Garibaldi. A common war cry of the brigands was “*Viva Francesco!*” to which the peasants echoed “Garibaldi came here to take the bread out of our mouth,” “Our king is only

---

<sup>67</sup> Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 408.

<sup>68</sup> Molfese, 35.

<sup>69</sup> Alessandro Capone, “Southern Rebels Against Italian Unification: the Great Brigandage in the Province of Capitanata,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22, no. 4 (2017), 16.

<sup>70</sup> Capone, “Southern Rebels Against Italian Unification,” 16.

Francis.”<sup>71</sup> The background of the brigand leaders and the nature of their protest arguably ascribed to brigandage further political import.

Brigandage made it clear that the State did not hold full sovereignty over its people and territory. It questioned the legitimacy of the State, and precipitated a large-scale political crisis. The crisis materialized through the widespread use of violence, both by the State and by its citizens. The brigands carried out destructive deeds and often murdered army officials and locals according to their needs. However, even the Italian State exercised tremendous violence in its repression. Under the Sardinian Penal Code of 1859, which was extended to Italy as a whole after Unification, voluntary manslaughter, association with criminals, and rebellion against the police were punishable by the death penalty.<sup>72</sup> The Italian authorities gave maximum publicity to the executions of brigands in order to discourage the peasantry from joining. By doing so, it issued a political declaration of control, albeit tacitly admitting the politicized nature of brigandage. The events of August 1861 in the Matese perfectly exemplified this issue, In an area where repression flourished, brigandage acquired the support of the peasantry pursuing its class objectives, and seeking political redemption but not with a “foreign king.”<sup>73</sup>

### **Brigandage in the Matese and Terra di Lavoro**

The area of the Matese and Terra di Lavoro is not often considered essential to the understanding of brigandage as a cultural phenomenon. However, the Matese represented a crucial area in the development of brigandage, as it was one of the first affected provinces.

---

<sup>71</sup> de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento*, 178

<sup>72</sup> The Sardinian Penal Code had abolished death penalty for political crimes, but retained it in these three cases. The depolitization of brigandage served to the authorities to legitimize the use of capital punishment against the rebels, as well as discrediting the reactionary Southern elites who used common criminals for their political objectives. Capone, “Southern Rebels Against Italian Unification,” 13.

<sup>73</sup> de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento*, 176.

Although by 1861 the whole South was destabilized, a general insurrection erupted only in this territory.<sup>74</sup> In 1867, even after the Great Brigandage had been substantially defeated, the Matese became an independent “military zone” due to the continuing violence that plagued the region.<sup>75</sup> The structure of a military zone was that of an occupied territory, as it included permanent military settlements in the major towns, as well as mobile troops assigned to daily patrol, security services, and capture of suspect individuals. The military zone was kept under martial law, which led to the restriction of civil liberties and a partisan administration of justice by the National Army.

The area of the Matese was commanded by General Lanzavecchia di Buri, later by General Dall’Aglia, and finally by General Bianchetti. It was divided in three areas, namely, Isernia, with contingents in Castellone, Monteroduni, and Casino Staffoli; Venafro, with contingents in Montaquila and Pozzilli; and Piedimonte d’Alife, with contingents in Sant’Angelo, San Gregorio, Masseria del Duca, Campo Oracca, and Gioia. A fourth zone was later added in Boiano, and two subdivisions were positioned in Morcone and Pontelandolfo. All of these military settlements are indicative of the magnitude of brigandage in the Matese, and of the State’s enormous efforts to repress it. In fact, although in a much smaller scale, the Matese was one of the areas in which brigandage lasted the longest, with brigand attacks recorded until the 1880s.<sup>76</sup>

As previously discussed, the demise of the Garibaldian and Bourbon army led several former soldiers to participate in popular revolts and brigandage. Many Southerners had enlisted in Garibaldi’s army and marched with him from Sicily to Teano, where he officially “handed

---

<sup>74</sup> Flavio Russo, *Dai Sanniti all'Esercito Italiano* (Roma: Stato Maggiore Esercito - Ufficio Storico. 1991), 179.

<sup>75</sup> A military zone is an independent jurisdiction within a larger territory holding priority and higher levels of militarization. Military zones were usually set up in areas of high periculosity and numbers of brigand bands. Russo, *Dai Sanniti all'Esercito Italiano*, 175.

<sup>76</sup> Russo, 175.

over” the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to King Victor Emmanuel II on 26 October 1860. In September, the social upheaval had already begun in the adjacent regions of Terra di Lavoro, Molise, and Beneventano, where moderates and democrats established provisional governments in the name of Victor Emmanuel II and Garibaldi. For this purpose, the Garibaldians formed the *Legione del Matese*, a volunteer corp of 350 men, and the Battalions of Sannio, Vitulanese-Beneventano, and the Hunters of Vesuvio.<sup>77</sup> However, the Bourbons had also organized their opposing forces, integrating large shares of the locals. The “*cafoni*,” members of the lowest classes, supported by the King’s troops, attacked the Garibaldians and the local landlords, and pillaged several villages, reestablishing the former governments and the status quo. The involvement of the local population in the Bourbon ranks proved to be a useful tactic for the King, who later readopted it in the form of brigandage in hope of reconquering his lost Kingdom.<sup>78</sup>

From the first agitations of 1860, brigandage rapidly became epidemic. The former Bourbon troops and veterans of the siege of Gaeta were the originators. Men evading conscription, deserters from the Italian army, local peasants, and petty criminals joined soon after, encouraged by the economic pressure, social injustices, pro-Bourbon sentiments, and spirit of adventure. The table below illustrates the composition of a sample of 1320 known brigands in the Matese between 1860 and 1870. The majority of these brigands were illiterate peasants without property (*impossidenti*). Some, however, were literate and most had no criminal record.

---

<sup>77</sup> Rosario Di Lello and Giuliano R. Palumbo, *Brigantaggio sul Matese 1860-1880* (mostra storica promossa dall'Amministrazione Provinciale di Benevento - Museo del sannio nella Rocca dei Rettori Pontifici, marzo -giugno 1983). Piedimonte Matese: Edizioni Museo del Sannio - Tipografia Stampa Sud, 1983.

<sup>78</sup> The Bourbons took refuge in the Papal States from where they directed the brigands’ “counterrevolution”. However, they gradually revoked their support as the Italian Army’s response to brigandage became more decisive. Many Bourbon initiatives were intercepted and conspirators were often arrested on the border with the Papal States. The overall strengthening of the Italian State in their fight against brigandage and vis à vis the Southern population led the Bourbons to abandon their project of restoration of the monarchy. Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 52.

This subsequently complicates the popular image of brigand groups as both criminal and illiterate, and adds to the problematization of brigandage as a political movement.

Briganti		Mestiere					Istruzione		Proprietà		Prec. penali	
Numero	Età	Contadini	Pastori	Bracciali	Carbonai	Artigiani	Letterati	Illetterati	Possidenti	Impossidenti	Incensurati	Censurati
1320	19 - 26	792	99	264	77	88	165	1155	99	1221	1089	231

Figure 3: Brigands in the Matese

Source: Rosario Di Lello and Giuliano R. Palumbo, *Brigantaggio sul Matese 1860-1880* (mostra storica promossa dall'Amministrazione Provinciale di Benevento - Museo del sannio nella Rocca dei Rettori Pontifici, marzo -giugno 1983), Piedimonte Matese: Edizioni Museo del Sannio - Tipografia Stampa Sud, 1983.

Nonetheless, the primary objective of brigands remained to mobilize the *gente bassa*, who were the poorest peasantry and social groups, to rebel together. The bands immediately received widespread support, and emerged by the hundred near the towns.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> The group of Pietro Trifilio raided the countryside between Presenzano and Valle Agricola; Samuele Cimino and Domenicangelo Cecchino pressured Letino, Gallo, and Prata; the numerous bands led by Giuseppe Cutillo, Cosimo Giordano, Angelo Pica, Filippo Tommaselli, Giuseppe Leone, and Angelo Varrone ruled over the territory between Solopaca to the Tesina Valley, to Cerreto, San Lupo, Pontelandolfo, and Guardiaregia. Brigands took over almost the entirety of the Matese province. Luisa Sangiuolo, "Caporal Cosimo," *Brigantaggio.net*, 2002.

## Cosimo Giordano and the *Banda Giordano*: One Week in the Matese in 1861

It was the band of Cosimo Giordano which dominated the Matese between 1860-1. “Corporal Cosimo,” as he was nicknamed, was born on 15 October 1838 in Cerreto Sannita in the heart of the Matese. At the age of 16, he committed his first murder of a local landowner who had killed his father. Giordano was acquitted of his crime and worked as a stable boy, until he joined the Bourbon army in 1860. Rising to the rank of corporal in the Army of the Two Sicilies, he took part in the Battle of Volturno, where the Bourbons were defeated by Garibaldi. After the disintegration of the Bourbon army, Giordano returned to the Matese, where he formed a brigand band that he led in several attacks. He acquired the reputation of an unusually fierce brigand, committing several murders, extortions, and minor crimes against local landowners and bourgeois with whom he had quarreled in the past.<sup>80</sup>

The *Banda Giordano* was composed of several *sbandati*, the men who deserted or were dismissed from the armies, including Ludovico Vincenzo alias Pelucchiello, Pasquale Sanzari, Giuseppe Mastroianni, as well as several of his own relatives.<sup>81</sup> The band launched the tragic occupations in Pontelandolfo and Casalduni, where the local peasants massacred an army contingent on 11 August 1861. Their violent uprising triggered an equally violent reprisal. The National Army, led by the general Enrico Cialdini (1811-1892), set both towns on fire and killed the inhabitants. These events were only the first of a long series of attacks between peasants, brigands, and the army. The violence exercised by all parties had a long-lasting legacy. On one hand, it exacerbated brigandage as the only way to respond to the brutality of the National Guard; on the other, it convinced the army that the exercise of violence was necessary to tame the

---

<sup>80</sup> Sangiuolo.

<sup>81</sup> Sangiuolo.

uprisings. This logic characterized the relationship between the brigands and the army until the end.<sup>82</sup>

The events of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni unfolded over the course of a week. On 7 August 1861, a popular revolt exploded in the town of Pontelandolfo after several days of tension. Cosimo Giordano had planned the insurrection together with the archpriest Epifanio Di Gregorio. The start signal was given in the neighboring town of San Lupo by a peasant waving the flag of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. A shootout immediately followed between the brigands and the soldiers stationed in the town, and two brigands were wounded. In Pontelandolfo, the mayor Saverio Golino testified on the events, and revealed that the band was composed of around fifty individuals from Pontelandolfo. In the late afternoon, these fifty brigands entered the town finding the locals already mobilized, and guided them to action.<sup>83</sup>

Giordano and his men, followed by approximately three thousand people, arrived at the guardhouse, disarmed the officials, and destroyed the portraits of Victor Emmanuel II and Garibaldi. Gregorio Perugini removed the Italian flag in a symbolic gesture. In the meantime, the insurgents accompanied by the brigands Gennaro di Rubbo and Salvatore Rinaldi, entered the house of the town's tax collector, Michelangelo Perugini, and killed him. The houses of the local landlords and powerful men were raided and burned, and the town's birth registers were destroyed. Later that evening, with the support of Don Epifanio, Giordano raised the flag of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the tower at the center of the town, and declared the institution of a provisional government. He also redistributed the money seized in the town hall and the

---

<sup>82</sup> de Matteo, *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento*, 216.

<sup>83</sup> Enrico Narciso, "Pontelandolfo e Casalduni," 2002, Brigantaggio.net.

various houses to the peasants. Similar events unfolded in the towns of Casalduni, Campolattaro, Faicchio, Guardia Sanframondi, and across the Matese for the following days.<sup>84</sup>

To reestablish order, the governor of Campobasso sent a contingent of the 36<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment of the National Army from Sepino to the Matese. On 11 August 1861, the general Cesare Augusto Bracci entered Pontelandolfo with forty soldiers and four carabinieri. The events that followed are uncertain. According to the local historian Flavio Russo, Bracci reached the tower of Pontelandolfo, but was unable to capture it, and retreated out of the town towards San Lupo. Saverio Golino once again testified on the events. He claimed that Bracci and his forty-five soldiers entered the town waving a white flag. Golino organized for them provisions and shelter, while his friend Carlo Tommaso Bisconti ran to the town of Campolattaro to organize the rebel forces. In a short time, however, Pontelandolfo was under siege, and the soldiers fled towards San Lupo, as they had been unable to take refuge anywhere in town. Chased by the insurgents, the contingent moved instead towards Casalduni, where they were caught in an ambush prepared by the brigands and the peasants. The soldiers were captured and taken to the guardhouse. One of them, whose name remains unknown, escaped and retreated to Campobasso. There, he testified that the troops in Pontelandolfo were caught in a surprise attack. He also reported that general Bracci had been wounded and taken by his men to Casalduni, where the people “tore them all apart with indescribable anger.”<sup>85</sup> General Bracci was ultimately killed together with other thirty-six soldiers. Other five officials had already been murdered while in Pontelandolfo.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Narciso, “Pontelandolfo e Casalduni;” Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (London: Penguin Group, 2007), 221.

<sup>85</sup> Narciso, “Pontelandolfo e Casalduni;” Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 222.

<sup>86</sup> Russo, *Dai Sanniti all'Esercito Italiano*, 181.

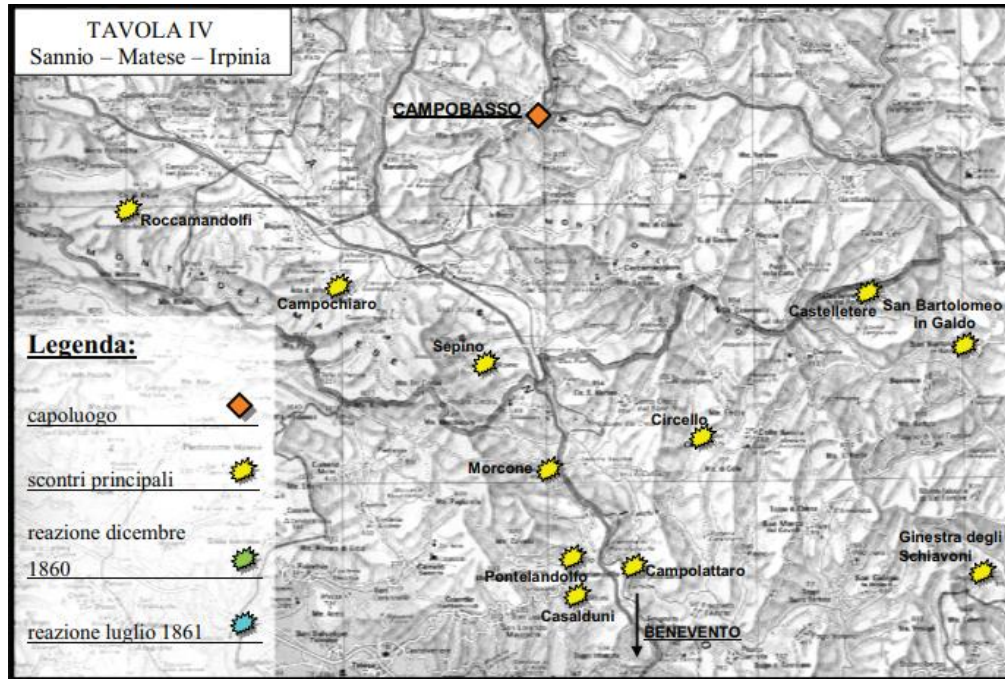


Figure 4: Matese. The Main Uprisings (1860)

Source: Antonio Grifa, *Il Brigantaggio Meridionale nella Stampa Clericale e Moderata*, Tesi di Laurea, (Padova: Università degli Studi di Padova, 2008).

## The Massacre of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni

The events of 7 August led to serious repercussions. As soon as General Cialdini received news of the massacre, he summoned one of his officers, Carlo Melegari, and sent him to Benevento.

There, he was to meet with Colonel Pier Eleonoro Negri, and march on Pontelandolfo and Casalduni. The two men left Benevento on the night of 13 August with five-hundred infantry and four companies of the *bersaglieri*. By dawn, they had arrived in Casalduni, where only three people remained, the other townspeople having fled after hearing that Negri and his soldiers

were approaching.<sup>87</sup> After shooting the three people who were unable to flee, the soldiers proceeded towards Pontelandolfo, where people were still asleep and unaware of the danger. The troops were instructed to not kill women, children and the sick; however, indiscriminate violence broke out. Don Epifanio, considered little better than a brigand, was a primary target, and Negri gave instructions that he symbolically be executed first. It is unclear if he was killed or managed to escape, but he was not heard of again.<sup>88</sup>

The troops must have been in Pontelandolfo for five or six hours. The day after the massacre, 15 August 1861, General Negri sent a telegram to the Governor of Benevento: “Yesterday morning, justice was done to Pontelandolfo and Casalduni. They are still burning. The sergeant of the 36th regiment is still with us, the only one left from the forty [men who were massacred by the insurgents in Pontelandolfo].”<sup>89</sup> Estimates regarding the number of people killed ranges from one-hundred to over one thousand. In 2016, however, local historian Annibale Laudato found in the Church archives a letter written in 1861 by Carolina Lombardi that much reduced the number of casualties. Donna Carolina, a native of Pontelandolfo, had fled the town with her husband, Salvatore Tedeschi, the local apothecary. They received news about the massacre of Pontelandolfo from Carolina’s parents, who had also successfully escaped. In the letter, addressed to Don Angelo Lombardi, her uncle and the priest of Sant’Agostino in Rome, Lombardi writes that the “*gente bassa*” began to “sack and burn the houses and properties of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Sources reported that the people who remained in Casalduni were too old to flee. One of them was supposedly paralyzed in bed. Narciso, “Pontelandolfo e Casalduni.”

<sup>88</sup>This information supposedly comes from the diary of a soldier named Carlo Margolfo. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 223.

Similarly, Cosimo Giordano was able to hide in the mountains, where he continued to stay until he moved to Lyon in 1882, where he opened a fruit stand. The police discovered it, and tricked Giordano to go to Genoa for a promising work opportunity. Immediately after crossing the boundary back to Italy, on 25 August 1882, he was arrested and taken to Benevento where he was in custody for two years. On 25 August 1884 he was ultimately sentenced to forced labor and life imprisonment. He died on 14 November 1888 in prison in the island of Favignana (Sicily). Luisa Sangiuolo, “Caporal Cosimo”.

<sup>89</sup> Narciso, “Pontelandolfo e Casalduni.”

owers with the aim of destroying the class of the *galantuomini* (gentlemen).” She also reports the arrival of Bracci’s regiment, and finally the intervention of the Army, noting that “around 13 people died in the conflict” as the soldiers put Pontelandolfo “*a sacco e fuoco*.”<sup>90</sup>

Notwithstanding these uncertainties about the number of people that died, the violence exercised by both parties was a clear indicator of a more profound cultural and political tension. A cultural dichotomy doubtlessly existed between the Piedmontese soldiers and the Matese peasants. The soldiers of Bracci’s 36<sup>th</sup> regiment sent to tame the uprising were probably unaware of the magnitude of the rebellion as well as unfamiliar with the area, and found themselves in a situation of absolute chaos. Thus, it is possible that the impression that they had of the local peasantry was one of savagery. Considering that similar conjunctures took place all over the South in the process of fighting brigandage, it should come as no surprise that the Northerners went along with the stereotype of Southerners as barbaric in their resistance.

### **A Reevaluation of Brigandage in the Matese**

However, a closer look at the rebellion of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni can perhaps offer a more complex scenario. In the long run, the ruling classes’ popularization of brigandage as a purely criminal phenomenon simplified an image of Southern society for foreign outsiders by classifying it as either brigands or their peasant victims. While the violence of the rebellion is unquestionable, the proactiveness of the peasantry cast into question the narrative of passivity

---

<sup>90</sup> Literally “to sack and fire.” It is a popular expression used to describe a situation of total destruction. Giancristiano Desiderio, “#Pontelandolfo. Una Lettera Inedita del 1861: ‘Perirono 13 Persone’” sannioexpress.it, 8 Aug. 2016.

Similar estimates were given by Davide Fernando Panella in his book “*L’incendio di Pontelandolfo e Casalduni: 14 agosto 1861*.” Panella based his work on existing bibliography and on the death records of the Church of Santissimo Salvatore in Pontelandolfo, which reported the list of the people who died. According to him, ten people were purposefully killed, whereas three burned in the fire. Among them, eleven were men and three women, respectively of ninety-four and eighteen years of age. Marco Vigna, “Considerazioni sui fatti di Pontelandolfo e Casalduni,” Nuovomonitorenapoletano.it, 23 March 2014.

that the ruling class had promoted about them. The events of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni showed that peasants and *gente bassa* joined forces with the *cafoni* and *sbandati* in organizing a rebellion that was highly political in its nature. Consequently, the “immense destruction, [the] stealing [of] the tiniest objects, [the] burning [of] books and furniture in the middle of the square” that Donna Carolina describes can be read as political statements of rejection of modernity, bureaucracy, and classism.<sup>91</sup>

For example, the burning of the commune’s records had a clear political objective of avoiding the draft. As previously explained, in June 1861, just two months before the rebellions in the Matese, the State had finished a first redrafting of soldiers in the Army, and was likely preparing another one due to the low numbers of reenlistments. For this reason, burning birth registers ensured that the State would not be able to find anyone to draft, since the eligible young men would technically disappear from the records. Similarly, it would ensure that the generalities of the men and women who eventually joined the brigands would remain unknown. The registers were also a way for the local administration to take a census and keep track of the inhabitants for tax payments and similar administrative matters. Thus, burning the records assumed a political character in its overt rejection of the authority of the new Italian State, and showed that the peasantry seemed to oppose Unification, which had for them translated into a military occupation and forced conscription.

In 1861, pro-Bourbon sentiments were widespread. The legitimism of Bourbon supporters translated in the repudiation of Italian symbols, such as the destruction of Garibaldi and the King’s portraits, as well as in the direct attacks on Italian troops. However, in 1861, troops deployed in the South were relatively few compared to later years and, even if attacks against them took place, they were not the main target of the rebels. In fact, manifestations of

---

<sup>91</sup> Carolina Lombardi, cited in Giancristiano Desiderio, “#Pontelandolfo.”

Bourbon legitimism were more easily carried out against the local liberal elites.<sup>92</sup> For instance, the Tedeschi family, into which Donna Carolina had married, had supported Unification and some of its members had enlisted the Italian Army in 1861.<sup>93</sup> Unsurprisingly, she writes that her house was raided and destroyed, together with that of the State Chancellor. Hence, building on Molfese's claims about the classist elements of brigandage, it is possible to argue that the destruction of the landlords' property by the peasantry and the brigands was another expression of political class struggle.

That said, the events of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni also showed how easy it was for brigands to incite the peasantry to extreme violence. According to Saverio Golino, the brigands Saverio Rubbo and Salvatore Rinaldi incited Giordano to action, claiming that they "made the gentleman run away" and that "the peasants are with us; the *popolo basso* awaits us, we have nothing to fear."<sup>94</sup> The peasantry of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni seemed to put their trust in the brigands, who, in turn, relied on the peasants to enact their rebellion. This interdependence can perhaps be better illustrated by looking at the "myth of the bandit."<sup>95</sup> In traditional Southern folklore, brigandage has come to express a pursuit of honor and power, as well as the enforcement of justice vis à vis an absent State. In 1861, the power of the Italian State in the South was extremely weak, and people could not – and did not want to – rely on the State institutions. Brigands inspired fear and respect in a society where there was no central control over the means of violence, insofar as the State was still unable to contrast the power of the local

---

<sup>92</sup> Russo, *Dai Sanniti all'Esercito Italiano*, 163.

<sup>93</sup> Desiderio, "#Pontelandolfo."

<sup>94</sup> Narciso, "Pontelandolfo e Casalduni."

<sup>95</sup> Anton Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (1972), 502.

landlords. The “brigand” was considered as a hero and benefactor, a friend and ally of the peasants, and appealed to those who were respected the least.<sup>96</sup>

The myth helps us understand why the brigands might have been able to effortlessly mobilize the peasantry to action in Pontelandolfo and Casalduni. They could provide a cohesive leadership, which was much needed in turning jacqueries into concerted and successful action.<sup>97</sup> Arguably, part of the success of the brigands stems from their role as “outside leaders,” who, however, were not truly outsiders. In fact, although bands travelled to some degree across the South and united forces with other locals, brigands concentrated their action mostly in the territory where they were born. This strategy provided several advantages. In the first place, they were more familiar with the geography of the territory and could move easily across the mountains and forests. This knowledge gave them crucial tactical advantage against the soldiers, who were generally “foreigners” from the North. Furthermore, acting in their native area would ensure that the locals, both peasants and landlords, already knew them, and thus would be more willing to collaborate. Cosimo Giordano and his men were all from the Matese, and were so locally renowned that before word of their insurrection had spread, the peasants had already mobilized and were ready to join them.

Anton Blok offers an interesting counterclaim and argues that bandits are external to jacquerie movements in sustaining action on a wider scale. For him, the brigands aimed at self-perpetuation, and were not “loyal” towards the peasants, who, in fact, they suppressed. Rather than promoting the interests of the peasantry within a national context, brigands tended to corrupt them in order to protect their own by means of physical violence or intimidation.<sup>98</sup> In addition, he argues that peasants could not offer brigands the protection that they needed from

---

<sup>96</sup> Blok, "The Peasant and the Brigand," 501.

<sup>97</sup> Blok, 499.

<sup>98</sup> Blok, 499-500.

the law. Since brigandage provided channels to move up in the social hierarchy through this system of protection, it weakened class solidarity and therefore hindered a large scale peasant mobilization.<sup>99</sup> Although it is true that the brigands became increasingly violent towards the peasants, the early years of brigandage proved that instead the two key agents seemed to act in concert with the aim of political mobilization.<sup>100</sup> One likely facilitating factor to this end, as Blok himself admits, was the presence of a rival power that disrupted the existing structures. In this sense, brigandage became effective in challenging a vying regime by uniting the peasantry against the common enemy represented by the Piedmontese.

The numbers of brigandage in the Matese prove this claim. In a territory of less than a thousand sq.km. and 130,000 inhabitants, 88 armed bands operated between the years 1861-1870. The sizes of the bands varied anywhere from five to over 200 men. With the support of the local peasantry, they carried out a total of 42 assaults to towns, 35 depredations of National Guard posts, 139 killings of soldiers, carabinieri and National Guard members, 293 kidnappings, and 419 various acts of disturbance, including intimidations, raids, rustlings, and thefts. The response of the National Army was equally forceful. The national Guard stationed in the area totaled 430 officials and 6920 ordinary soldiers. Their retaliation produced 152 gunfights, 169 killings of brigands, 228 arrests, 106 executions, and 224 surrenders. 752 civilians in the district of Cerreto Sannita, and 760 in Piedimonte were also arrested or put under police surveillance charged with supporting the brigands or disrupting public order.<sup>101</sup> After the events of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni, the *Banda Giordano* became a primary target. The incessant chase

---

<sup>99</sup> Blok, 496-8.

<sup>100</sup> The later model of brigandage is closer to Blok's interpretation. Brigandage increasingly lost its political valence as it equally served the peasants and the landlords with the aim of self-perpetuation. In particular, the Legge Pica and the re-organizing of the Italian Army pushed the brigands to great gratuitous violence, especially against the peasants to terrorize them and prevent them from collaborating with the State. This caused them to lose the popular support base that had so far helped them grow. Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 293.

<sup>101</sup> Di Lello & Palumbo, "Brigantaggio sul Matese 1860-1880".

of the *Banda* in the following years eventually led to its demise in 1864, when Cosimo Giordano abandoned brigandage temporarily to move to France.

The deterioration of public order that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, represented not only a great threat to the Kingdom of Italy, but it also cast into question the legitimacy of the State. Doubts regarding the allegiance of the Southern peasantry to the Unified State increased as they began to organize in brigand bands. While the end of the violence by the 1870s seemed to alleviate these doubts and strengthen the role of the Italian State vis à vis the Southern peasantry, the South remained profoundly affected by the years of the *Grande Brigantaggio*. In fact, brigandage as a local phenomenon proved to be a stronger unifying force among the peasantry than the State. It allowed to actively engage the peasants in combat, and gave them a chance to voice their needs, as exemplified in the events of the Matese. Despite the violence exercised by the brigands against the peasants, the unifying effect of brigandage lasted. The modern Southern collective unconscious has internalized brigandage as the expression of unity and pride, preferring to forget the problematic elements that also characterized the relationship between peasants and brigands. Similarly, the political proactivity of the peasantry at the time of brigandage negated the consolidated Northern narratives of their passivity. However, the violent experiences of the early 1860s instilled in the Southern peasantry a certain sense of cautiousness, which led them to reevaluate their position towards anti-State rebellions. They exercised this political agency in an exemplary way sixteen years later, when they chose not to collaborate with the anarchist insurgents of the *Banda del Matese*.

#### 4. The *Banda del Matese* and the Post-Unification Jacquerie

Post-Unification jacquerie was an event experienced and shaped by thousands of people across the South. Its interpretations differed among communities, and evolved during the rebellion and through the acts of repression and commemoration that followed. While the Italian ruling class saw this jacquerie only as an explosion of criminal violence, later external commentators began to attribute it with political valence in its objectives.<sup>102</sup> In particular, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), who had traveled across Italy in the 1860s, theorized on the jacquerie as catalyst for the anarchist social revolution. Bakunin was among the most prominent members of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), also known as the First International or International. IWA was an international organization founded in 1864 that united socialists, communists, and anarchists. However, after Karl Marx expelled Bakunin during the Hague Congress in 1872, the IWA split in two groups: Marxist and Bakunian Collectivist-Anarchist, which was the branch more prone to revolutionary action.<sup>103</sup>

In Italy, the Collective-Anarchists adopted a particular strategy for overthrowing the State. They intended to launch a "social revolution" from the Southern peasantry, whose poverty seemed to make them the perfect catalyst. Bakunin had claimed that the situation in the

---

<sup>102</sup> Firnhaber-Baker, "The Eponymous Jacquerie," 3.

<sup>103</sup> Marx and his followers believed that the revolutionary proletariat needed to establish a form of "transitional State" before beginning their dictatorship. Bakunin rejected this idea, and instead believed that the proletariat should not become a political party within a State. For him, the proletariat should participate alongside the peasantry to the social revolution and eliminate the State, not replace it. These differences of opinion led to the split of the International. Ironically, Bakunin had come to Italy following Marx's suggestion that he promoted the International in the country. Bakunin eventually met Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero during the International Congress of his branch in Saint-Imier in 1872. Both Malatesta and Cafiero, protagonists of the events in the Matese, will rise to be prominent figures within the anarchist movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Franco della Peruta, "La Banda del Matese e il Fallimento della Teoria Anarchica della Moderna "Jacquerie" in Italia." *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 3 (1954), 341.

South appeared favorable for an autonomous peasant revolution, owing to the unsustainable economic conditions of the region. Bakunin focused on the issue of property ownership, and noted in his analysis of brigandage that the peasants were able to rise autonomously to defend themselves against their feudal lords and reclaim their land. He thus concluded that the Southern peasantry was “necessarily socialist” and an “immense army and omnipotent for the social revolution.” This correlation was central in the planning of the Matese insurrection, as Bakunin prompted the anarchists to involve the local peasantry in reactionary action.<sup>104</sup>

### **The Social Revolution: One Week in the Matese in 1877**

As followers and friends of Bakunin, Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) and Carlo Cafiero (1846-1892) decided to take action after the Anarchist Congress of Florence-Tosi in 1876.<sup>105</sup> On the night of 5 April 1877, a group of twenty-six Italian anarchists scaled the snowy mountains of the Matese, in the region of Campania in Southern Italy. Guided by Malatesta, Cafiero, and Pietro Cesare Ceccarelli, the *Banda del Matese*, as they were later called, had as a central objective to spark a social revolution among the local peasant population. The Matese attempt, albeit unsuccessful, was a turning point in the history of Italian anarchism and in the politicization of the Southern Question. In fact, not only did the *Banda del Matese* convince the Italian State to clamp down on anarchism, but it also proved that the Southern peasantry was unwilling to follow “foreign” ideas and leaders.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> della Peruta, “La Banda del Matese,” 340.

<sup>105</sup> Bakunin had died a few months earlier. During his life, he became familiar with brigandage, although at a purely theoretical level. He never experienced it closely since he mostly resided in the North or in Naples, where brigandage never arrived. Nonetheless, his analysis of brigandage greatly influenced the perception of the anarchists in the revolution of the Matese. Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 119.

<sup>106</sup> Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, 128.

The events of the Matese unfolded as follows. On 3 April 1877, Carlo Cafiero, Errico Malatesta, and sixteen other anarchists, including the Russian Sergej Michajlovič Kravčinskij (who used the pseudonym Abraham Rubleff), entered the town of San Lupo di Benevento, and settled in the Taverna Jacobelli pretending to be English tourists. The insurrectionists smuggled two boxes of weapons and provisions in the tavern, and hired an ex-Garibaldian general, Vincenzo Farina, as their local guide. It is unclear why Farina decided to collaborate with the *Banda*, but it is likely that he was offered money in exchange for his help. He was entrusted with rallying the local population, who had grown suspicious of these foreigners in their lands.<sup>107</sup> However, on same night, while the *Banda* prepared for the insurrection, Farina instead alerted the local prefects, which set off a manhunt in the mountains, similar to those of the prior decade against the local brigands.

Simultaneously, the prefects of Naples and Benevento, which had been closely watching the anarchists during their preparations, joined efforts to arrest both the members of the *Banda* in San Lupo and those still on their way. As Pietro Ceccarelli wrote in a letter to his friend Amilcare Cipriani, “In the tavern, the seventeen of us were waiting for our fellow companions. The plan was to join forces overnight and occupy the town of San Lupo the following morning, burn the municipal archives, distribute the money from the public fund to the people and the wheat, and incite them to attack their lords and take over private property.”<sup>108</sup> After San Lupo, the *Banda* intended to advance further into the countryside and do the same in neighboring towns. However, as Ceccarelli continues, “Instead of our companions, we saw the *carabinieri*.

---

<sup>107</sup> Tourists in those mountains were rather uncommon, as it was the presence of any foreigner that was not part of the National Guard. The issue of “foreignness” will be present again in the analysis of the failure of the Matese jacquerie.

<sup>108</sup> Pietro Cesare Ceccarelli, “Lettera di P.Cesare Ceccarelli ad A.Cipriani,” in Bruno Tomasiello, *La Banda del Matese. 1876-1878. I documenti, le Testimonianze, la Stampa dell’Epoca*. (Casalvelino Scalo, SA: Galzerano Editore, 2009), 68.

We exchanged fire and two *carabinieri* fell. We believed that they had surrounded us, and so we ran towards the mountains.”<sup>109</sup>

Ceccarelli’s intuitions were correct. Although the insurrectionaries in San Lupo managed to escape to the mountains, all of those on their way to the Taverna Jacobelli were arrested. In the evening of 5 April, at the Solopaca train station, Kravčinskij was arrested together with seven other members of the *Banda*: Massimo Innocenti, Gaetano Grassi (with the false name Adamo Alberti), Leopoldo Arrighi (with the false name Luigi Pierelli), Pietro Gagliardi, Florido Matteucci, Dioniso Ceccarelli, and Silvio Ruggeri.<sup>110</sup> The arrest of the first eight men was a grave blow to the *Banda del Matese*, for not only did it reduce their numbers, and thus the possible impact, it also weakened its morale. As Ceccarelli writes in his letter, the few men that had escaped lacked weapons and provisions, which due to the arrest at the train station never arrived at the Taverna. Everything that they had in the tavern they had to leave behind during the escape. Ultimately, Ceccarelli argues that the reduced numbers of the *Banda* and the heavy snow that still covered the mountains caused the insurrectionaries to struggle as they marched for two days trying to outrun the soldiers.<sup>111</sup>

Sergey Kravčinskij (1851-1895) was one of the most prominent figures among the arrested.<sup>112</sup> He joined the insurrectionaries of the Matese as part of his friendship with Errico Malatesta, and was entrusted with the role of training the *Banda* due to his experience as artillery officer in Russia. He had also written a handbook on “band war” inspired by many stories of

---

<sup>109</sup> Ceccarelli, “Lettera,” 68.

<sup>110</sup> della Peruta, “La Banda del Matese,” 373.

<sup>111</sup> Ceccarelli, “Lettera,” 67.

<sup>112</sup> Kravčinskij had emigrated from Russia in 1874 after the Russian authorities tried to arrest him for provoking peasant agitations in Tver in 1873. He was ideologically close to Bakunin, and, after traveling across Europe, arrived in Italy to follow Malatesta in the Matese uprising (the two had met two years before in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they supported the Serbian uprisings against the Ottoman rule). After the Matese insurrection, Kravčinskij returned to Russia, where in 1878 he murdered General Nikolai Mezencev, the chief of Russia’s Gendarme Corps. “Sergey Mikhailovic Stepnjak Kravčinskij.” Publichnaya Biblioteka. 2018.

brigandage, and which was to be used as a guide in the Matese revolution. More importantly, Kravčinskij had theorized, together with Malatesta and others, the principle of the “propaganda of the deed,” crucial to the understanding of nineteenth century anarchy. According to the theory, only a dramatic and violent action could be the catalyst for revolution.<sup>113</sup> In the context of the Matese, the “deed” was the actions that the *Banda* carried out in the towns they entered, such as burning archives and redistributing government money. The whole insurrection of the Matese, however, might be considered the “deed” in itself: through the occupation of the towns the anarchist message would be delivered to the masses, who, in turn, would spread it across the lands and spark the Southern social revolution.

While this social revolution did not take place, the *Banda del Matese* did have temporary success as they were able to elude the police and move from one town to another. The insurgents of San Lupo, while hiding in the mountains, ran into another group of Internationalists coming from Rome. The two groups joined forces and the total number of the members of the *Banda* rose again to twenty-six. In the morning of April 8th, the *Banda* arrived in the town of Letino. At 10 a.m., they entered the town, waving the black and red flag of anarchy, and stormed the town hall where council was coincidentally being held. As they smashed the king’s portrait on the floor, they declared, “In the name of the social revolution, Victor Emmanuel has been deposed!” They proceeded to burn archival documents and to seize money and weapons which they then distributed to the townspeople.<sup>114</sup> Either Malatesta or Caffiero, as the only ones who spoke the local dialect, then rose on a pedestal in the square and, holding a cross, encouraged the people to join the revolution. Records report that after the speech, a woman asked the anarchists to divide the lands of Letino, to which they answered, “I fucili e le scuri ve li avimo dato, i cortelli li avite.

---

<sup>113</sup> della Peruta, “La Banda del Matese,” 341.

<sup>114</sup> della Peruta, 374.

Se volite facite, se no vi fottite.” (“We gave you the arms and the money, you have the knives. If you want, you can do it, if not go fuck yourselves”). The statement, which embodies the ideas of the “propaganda of the deed,” harkens back to the Bakunian idea of autonomous peasant revolution in Southern Italy. Ceccarelli writes to Cipriani that the effort in this case was to “to rove about the countryside for as long as possible, preaching class war, inciting social brigandage, occupying small towns and leaving them after having accomplished whatever revolutionary acts we could, and to proceed to that area where our presence would prove more useful.”<sup>115</sup>

According to plan, by the early afternoon of the same day, 8 April, the *Banda del Matese* was in a new town, Gallo del Matese, carrying out similar deeds. The anarchists seemed to put their revolutionary project in action, and continuously marched through the local villages and occupied them. For two days after leaving Gallo, the members of the *Banda del Matese* wandered through the mountains trying to enter nearby towns, all of which they found already occupied by soldiers. By the night of 10 April, the police had finally surrounded them from all sides. They attempted to cross the mountains to the province of Campobasso, but their new guide, Pietro Pace, got lost, and they were forced to retrace their steps. The heavy snow and fatigue built up over the week sapped their morale, and hunger and cold weakened them further. They took refuge in the Masseria Caccetta, five kilometers from Letino, where they were ultimately captured on 11 April by the 56<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment of the army led by captain Ugo de Nottis.

---

<sup>115</sup> Ceccarelli himself clarifies the intentions of the *Banda*, saying, “We carried out an act of provocation...We were a band of insurgents destined to provoke an insurrection that cannot and must not count on anything but the echo it may find in the population.” It is therefore clear that their only way of proceeding was by rallying the locals. Pietro Cesare Ceccarelli, “Letter to Amilcare Cipriani,” translation in Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, 119.

In the official report written by Lieutenant G. Serra to the prefect of Piedimonte d'Alife on 14 April 1877, the circumstances of the arrest are meticulously described. Lieutenant Serra reports that at 4 p.m. the guide he appointed, Vincenzo Lombardo, informed them of the presence of armed bandits in a tavern in Soava Della Voci. Serra writes that he immediately alerted his troops and arrived at the Masseria, where twenty-five of the anarchists were arrested without opposition (the twenty-sixth had escaped but was later arrested in Naples). The list of the arrested included Errico Malatesta, Carlo Cafiero, and Pietro Ceccarelli, and the names of twenty-two other men:

    Ceccarelli Domenico, 27, shopkeeper from Savignano (Forlì),

    Gualani Carlo, 27, construction worker from Dozza (Bologna)

    Sbigoli Gaetano, 29, office employee from Florence,

    Lazzari Angelo, 25, lithographer from Perugia,

    Celloni Sante, 24, chiseler from Imola (Bologna),

    Facchini Ariodante, 22, clerk from Bologna,

    Buscarini Sisto, 27, blacksmith from Fabbriano (Ancona),

    Lazzari Umberto, 24, construction worker from Bologna,

    Pallotta Carlo, 25, upholsterer from Terni (Ancona),

    Volponi Giuseppe, 20, construction worker from Pistoia,

    Bianchi Alamiro, 25, tailor from Pescia (Pistoia),

    Poggi Luigi, 31, construction worker from Imola (Bologna),

    Poggi Domenico, 24, construction worker from Imola (Bologna),

    Bezzi Domenico, 35, construction worker from Ravenna,

    Count Ginnasi Francesco, 18, landowner from Imola (Bologna),

Castellazzi Luigi, 31, shoemaker from Imola (Bologna),  
Papini Napoleone, 20, clerk from Fano,  
Bennati Giuseppe, 37, construction worker from Imola,  
Starnari Antonio, 22, upholsterer from Filottrano (Ancona),  
Conti Ugo, 25, butcher from Imola (Bologna),  
Cornacchia Antonio, 41, construction worker from Solignano (Parma),  
Bianchini Giuseppe, 27, shopkeeper from Rimini.<sup>116</sup>

The report also states that twenty-one rifles, eleven bayonets, nine revolvers, twenty-seven hand cannons, a lot of war ammunition, a red and black silk flag, several cockades, letters, and other miscellaneous objects were confiscated.<sup>117</sup> Among other charges, the *Banda* was accused of killing a carabinieri and injuring another.<sup>118</sup> After the arrest, all twenty-six members were taken to Benevento. After only two hours in the trial, on 25 August 1878, the Court of Assizes acquitted them all.<sup>119</sup>

The list of the arrested insurgents reveals important details regarding the status of the men inspired by the principles of anarchist social revolution. The average age of the insurgents was twenty six, and, except for Count Francesco Ginnasi, they all were shopkeepers, clerks, and

---

<sup>116</sup> Leone Gasparini, *La "Banda del Matese."* *La Guerriglia nell'Italia Post-Unitaria* (Casalvelino Scalo. Galzerano Editore, 1983), 86-7.

<sup>117</sup> G. Serra, cited in Leone Gasparini, *La "Banda del Matese,"* 86-7.

<sup>118</sup> These are the same *carabinieri* that Ceccarelli described in his letter. It seems that only one of them was actually killed, while the other one survived the attack.

<sup>119</sup> It is unclear why the *Banda del Matese* was acquitted of all charges, considering that the National Guard and the various prefectures across Italy had been monitoring and arresting Malatesta and Cafiero already for several years. Perhaps, the liberal government led by Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889) might have influenced the decision in reducing the charges to manslaughter and removing the aggravating factor of revolution against the State. The new governments in the following years radically changed their attitude towards revolutionaries. In any case, the two anarchists did not stop their revolutionary activity after the failure of April 1877. While Cafiero died in a mental institution in 1892, Malatesta continued his propaganda even under Fascism. He was put under strict observation by Mussolini, which caused him to be isolated in his house, where he died of bronchial pneumonia in 1932. Eros Francescangeli, "La Banda del Matese e Altri Colpi di Mano Internazionalisti," *Gli italiani in guerra. Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, vol. 2, ed. Mario Isnenghi and Simon Levis Sullam (Torino: UTET, 2009), 131.

workers belonging to the lower classes. They were from both cities and small towns, primarily in Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, which are notoriously radical areas. This detail shows a certain level of ideological alignment and social mobility between urban and rural settings in the North that was uncommon in the South. Although it has not been possible to find data on their literacy rates or income, it seems that the *Banda* was significantly different from the Matese peasantry, at least in terms of provenience and social standing. Moreover, their characteristics fit well the standard historical profile of nineteenth century Italian anarcho-socialism. According to Bakunin, in fact, Italy's revolutionary potential derived from its Lumpenproletariat composed of peasants and of few "bourgeois workers," such as the insurrectionaries of the Matese. Owing to the greater economic development of their society, the "bourgeois workers" from the North had to lead the insurrection. Instead, the peasant masses of the South had to finalize it, for they only shared a "universal ideal," which was a belief in their rights derived from popular instinct and nurtured by bitter experience.<sup>120</sup>

These conditions for social revolution were used by the *Banda del Matese*. Cafiero and Malatesta were the only Southerners to take part in the insurrection because they were needed to connect with the locals, and because of their preeminent profiles in the anarchist International.<sup>121</sup> The rest of the participants were from Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, the Marches, and Umbria, where these anarcho-socialist messages spread earlier and to a larger extent than in the South. The choice of the Matese area was also motivated by the same Bakunian reasoning. Aside from the practical advantages of the territory, which was located across five provinces and in the

---

<sup>120</sup> Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, 83.

<sup>121</sup> Carlo Cafiero had been the president of the Rimini Conference of the Anarchist International in August 1872, which proclaimed the birth of the Italian branch of the IWA loyal to Bakunin. Errico Malatesta was among the delegates, and Andrea Costa, who had promised support to the Matese revolution, was the secretary. After the Conference, Cafiero, Malatesta joined Bakunin in Saint-Imier. They became close friends and lived for a while in *La Baronata*, a villa near Locarno, Switzerland, which Cafiero had bought for Bakunin, and where the Matese insurrection was first conceived. Pernicone, 65.

mountains, the local towns were acquainted with and supportive of brigandage. The Matese was also populated by mostly illiterate peasants who were seen by the anarchists as ready to embrace the message of social revolution, owing to the centuries of feudal exploitation and poverty they had experienced.

Although the theory of the Matese revolution was well outlined, the *Banda* failed. The first point to consider is that the *Banda* had to confront significant organizational obstacles. From its intended complement of over one hundred units, only twenty-six were actually present. The support troops assembled by Andrea Costa in Romagna never arrived, as Costa did not know about the manhunt in the Matese and received news of the *Banda* only after their arrest. The second problem was that the police was informed about the attempt from internal spies in the Internationalist movement, and had been following Cafiero and Malatesta for months. As a result, the two moved forward the insurrection by one month. Accelerating the preparations also led to the *Banda* being ill-equipped and getting caught up in the snow.<sup>122</sup> Still, if the insurrection of the Matese was a technical failure, it was a crucial episode in the history of Italian anarchism and post-Unification South, for it showed the end of the Italian political jacquerie.

The Matese attempt was the last significant insurrection carried out by the Internationalists. After the process of Benevento, Italian Interior Minister Nicotera began to crack down on anarchists. Despite his resignation in 1877, Nicotera set in motion a repressive campaign against the International, which resulted in the almost complete eradication of the movement within three years. The government of the Historic Right, guided by Giovanni Lanza (1810-1882), changed its policy towards insurrections from repressive to preventive in restricting civil liberties and detaining Internationalists and other rebels.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, as the Italian State

---

<sup>122</sup> Pernicone, 123.

<sup>123</sup> Pernicone, 127-130.

acquired more power, memories of Unification began to fade, and the peasantry adjusted to the new regime.<sup>124</sup> The revolutionary momentum of brigandage was long lost, and the crack down on insurrections discouraged the emergence of other jacqueries. Although the peasants' discontent for the current state of affairs persisted, they largely abandoned armed rebellion as a way to push forward their political agenda, preferring instead to collaborate with the State or abandon the South.

### **The *Banda Giordano* and the *Banda del Matese*: A Comparative Analysis**

Strikingly, the mountains of the Matese hosted two of the most significant episodes of dissent in the first decades of post-Unification Italian history. Brigandage and the attempted anarchist revolution took place in different historical moments and involved different participants, yet both cast into question the social legitimacy of the new State's institutions. The violence exercised by the peasantry, by the anarchists, and by the Italian State was a clear indicator of a failed process of State formation, which had translated into extreme expressions of popular discontent. To this end, a microhistorical comparison of the *Banda Giordano* and the *Banda del Matese* may help us investigate the politics of identity and rebellion in the context of peasant militancy. The smaller scale of research encourages an insightful comparison between the two episodes that also allows an analysis of the political dimension of peasant agency, which varied according to the revolutionary leaders in question. They suggest that in rural communities founded on a shared identity, identification played a crucial role in political activism, or, as in this case, in revolutionary struggle.

---

<sup>124</sup> Pernicone, 128.

The mass recruitment of peasants in the wars between the Bourbons and the Italian army fought in the South in 1860 had long lasting political consequences. The Bourbon monarchy's endorsement of direct action, including violence against the liberal "rebels" and the legitimization of any subsequent action, including the seizure of private property, spread among the Southern peasant masses the conviction of the justice and of the "legality" of their opposition to Unification.<sup>125</sup> The alliance with the Bourbons was also a way for the peasants to pursue their immediate interests, such as endowment for their successful rebellion. Molfese argues, however, that the rebellions of 1860-1 were mostly instinctive, as they were motivated by the opposition of the peasant class against the landlords for reasons of land property and usage.<sup>126</sup> The entrenched ideology of the peasants, based partly on the pursuance of their immediate economic interests, and partly on resentment against their feudal oppressors, provided an inspiration for their resistance. This ideology eventually translated in the generalized tendency of violence and reaction that generated brigandage.<sup>127</sup>

A similar claim regarding the attitude of the peasantry vis à vis anarchism is more problematic, for they never interacted with the anarchists as much as with the brigands. Certainly, anarchy was a *fil rouge* in contemporary Northern and elitist discourse, which often attributed a "yearning for destruction" and vendettas to the Southern peasants.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Molfese remarked that mass uprisings in the South had two primary motivations. First, an anarchic impulse for devastation, typical of the backward peasant mentality.<sup>129</sup> Second, the thirst for adventure. Mikhail Bakunin drew similar conclusions, as he argued that the peasant

---

<sup>125</sup> Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 16.

<sup>126</sup> Molfese, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Molfese, 16.

<sup>128</sup> Molfese, 132

<sup>129</sup> Molfese, 131

proletariat would spontaneously turn against the greedy bourgeoisie.<sup>130</sup> Bakunin trusted in the transformation of society generated by economic and political progress, which would have made the peasants conscious of their alienation and pushed them to rebel.<sup>131</sup> He attributed a political value to peasant militancy, and, taking inspiration from the local *imperium* (influence, power) of brigandage, advocated for an autonomous revolution.<sup>132</sup>

While these claims make sense in the context of post-Unification South, Molfese and Bakunin fail to acknowledge the shrewd behavior of the peasantry. The quasi-atavism that they attribute to the peasants contrasts with the reality of the facts. Although there are not enough sources that officialize the position of the peasantry, a circumstantial case can be made to support the rationality of their behavior. For the peasantry, early brigandage was a strategy to rebel and pursue their interests. The Bourbon's support was an added incentive, as the monarchy promised rewards, such as land and money, that would have satisfied the immediate interests of the peasants. The change in government and the neglected promises of Risorgimento were catalysts for a revolution that had practical objectives. On the other hand, the anarchist social revolution did not offer immediate gains; moreover, it was carried out by leaders whose political ideology and provenience was foreign to the peasants of the Matese, who thus chose to dissociate themselves from the *Banda*. Bakunin and the Internationalists likely oversimplified the peasants' rationale for rebellion in attributing it simply to the economic depression of the South.

---

<sup>130</sup> Eugenio Forni, Chapter XII of *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*, in *La Banda del Matese 1876-1878*, ed. Bruno Tomasiello (Casalvelino Scalo:Galzerano Editore, 2009), 33.

<sup>131</sup> della Peruta,"*La Banda del Matese*," 341.

<sup>132</sup> At this point, it is important to mention the previous attempts to social revolution by Italian anarchists. In 1874, they tried to rally the local population in Bologna and in Apulia, but these insurrections were prevented by the intervention of the army. Forni asserted that the anarchists put hope in the "more passionate and braver spirits" of the locals, which they hoped would be key for the success of the *Banda*. In fact, there was a common narrative in Italy that linked the inhabitants of Campania to the ancient Samintres, who had fiercely resisted the expansion of Rome until their annihilation in the first century B.C.E. Forni, Chapter XII, 33.

Pietro Ceccarelli himself noted in his letter to Amilcare Cipriani that the true catalyst for Southern revolution was not political change, but economic reversal. For the peasants, the economic revolution could be realized only in the form “expropriation of the landlords [property], freedom from the police, tax collectors, and pretors.”<sup>133</sup> While the economic issues that they wanted to solve continued to afflict the peasant class, the *Banda* did not follow through in building on these aims, and therefore failed to provide a solid leadership.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, the defeat of brigandage through what Pasquale Villari called “rivers of blood” had led the peasantry to avoid direct rebellion, as they were aware that previous conflicts had been unsuccessful.<sup>135</sup> Ultimately, for the peasantry the solution to the problems of the Southern Question was to be found elsewhere, for example the Americas, where they began to emigrate.<sup>136</sup>

The similarities between the insurrections of 1861 and 1877 demarcate the role of peasant agency and character. The technical elements of the uprisings are the first obvious connection. For instance, Sergej Kravčinskij’s manual outlined the techniques of “band war,” i.e., guerrilla warfare “first in the mountains and then in the woods, constituted by small bands, then growing until able to attack an army and take possession of the capital.”<sup>137</sup> “Band war” was the war tactic of the brigands, who operated mostly in the countryside. As the number and size of

---

<sup>133</sup> Ceccarelli, “Lettera,” 33.

<sup>134</sup> The controversial *tassa sul macinato* was applied in 1878 (Law 4490 of July, 7th 1878). In addition, further ecclesiastical land expropriations were carried out to promote privatization; however, due to the problematic legislation, the lands were given only to State creditors in exchange for government debt securities. This impartial distribution concentrated property in the hands of State functionaries and upper class landowners. Luigi Parente, “Economia e Società nel Sannio Post-Unitario,” in *Movimenti Sociali e Lotte Politiche nell’Italia Liberale: Il Moto Anarchico del Matese*, ed. Luigi Parente (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001), 178.

<sup>135</sup> On this note, Molfese commented that the failure of the *jacquerie* resided in its contrast to the progressive development of political institutions and of the economic and social realities of the country, which were guided by the upper classes. These considerations are applicable to both brigandage and the anarchist insurrection, as they constituted episodes of rebellion juxtaposed to an implacable process of State development, even if at the time the State was perceived short-lived. Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 343.

<sup>136</sup> In the Campania region, transoceanic migration became intensive starting in the 1880s; however, it was widespread already by the 1870s. Molfese, 182.

<sup>137</sup> Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World 1867–1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 64.

the bands grew, the brigands also posed a threat to the army, and they themselves adopted an army-like ranking system, dividing the power and commanding separate expeditions.<sup>138</sup>

Brigandage inspired the *Banda del Matese* for its war tactics and its ability to rally the local populations. However, as Whelehan underlines, the increased technological progress and modernisation of the telegraph, railways and deforestation, reduced the effectiveness of such tactics. This put the anarchists at a disadvantage vis à vis the brigands, who could count on a less sophisticated surveillance system.<sup>139</sup>

The use of revolutionary symbolism by the *Banda del Matese* was also similar to the brigands. For example, the burning of Letino's archives harked back to the same action by the brigands in Pontelandolfo fifteen years earlier. Although the *Banda* lacked the scope of the brigands in erasing the records to avoid conscription, their actions should have galvanized the peasantry in evoking a time of powerful jacquerie, since they symbolized the rejection of a centralized State authority. Similarly, the smashing of the king's portrait should have awoken the legitimism of the peasantry, or in any case sentiments of repudiation of the existing system. Moreover, the use of the cross in the speech in Letino was a particularly original and clever tactic. Using the religiosity of the peasantry as leverage, the symbolism of the cross should have allowed the *Banda* to find common ground with the peasants. In Letino, Malatesta or Cafiero were accompanied by a priest who preached a socialist-infused gospel to further persuade the population of the righteousness of this revolution.

---

<sup>138</sup> In the first years of brigandage (1861-63), brigand bands grew incredibly as more and more people saw the advantages of the brigand life, which included a pay and a share of the loot, freedom from conscription, and adventure. The high number of volunteers led to a simplification of the recruitment process, which only sometimes it included a "rite of passage" such as an extortion. The band of Cosimo Giordano too grew to the point that he had to divide it in four groups: three factions were put under the command of his trustees *Pilucchiello*, *Errichiello*, and *Girolamo Civitillo*, while he kept the smallest one for himself. Abele de Blasio, "Cosimo Giordano," 2017, [Brigantaggio.net](http://Brigantaggio.net).

<sup>139</sup> Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, 65.

What complicates the narrative of the *Banda del Matese* is the fact that the peasants were not persuaded even by the “religious” overtones of the revolution. Lewis-Beck offers an interesting insight on the issue arguing that religion contributes to the strengthening of political conservatism of the peasantry. Generally speaking, peasant conservatism, that is their political inclination towards the Right, is rooted in their social experience and identification with one region of the country. Right-wing conservatism generally includes religion as a fundamental element in politics and society, as opposed to left-wing political ideologies, including anarchy, which tend to deny it. Therefore, the *Banda del Matese* seemed to fall into a fundamental contradiction in justifying a subversive act with a conservatist emblem. Furthermore, religiosity has often been linked to regional or territorial divides, which are themselves considered key determinants in political differences.<sup>140</sup> The territorial fractures between the North and the South, expressed both geographically and in terms of political allegiance and social standing of the *Banda* and of the peasantry, also appeared crucial in granting popular support for the social revolution.

At this point, it is important to consider why these similarities in revolutionary techniques led to dramatically different outcomes. In fact, while the involvement of the peasant classes in brigandage appears straightforward, their passivity vis à vis the anarchists raises questions about the nature of peasant political agency as a whole. The citizens of Letino and Gallo were not convinced to join the effort of the *Banda* for reasons that we should now explore. Pernicone writes in his book *Italian Anarchism, 1864-2892* that the involvement of the peasantry was purely symbolic. They limited themselves to applaud, and, as soon as the *Banda* left, they

---

<sup>140</sup> Michael S. Lewis-Beck, “Explaining Peasant Conservatism: The Western European Case,” *British Journal of Political Science* 7, no. 4 (1977), 447-64.

returned to their daily routines and forgot about the insurgence.<sup>141</sup> Similar claims are already present in a 1878 account by Eugenio Forni. He reports that the “*popolino*” (the “little” people) threw away the cockards and flags left behind, and returned quietly to their lives.<sup>142</sup>

This behavior was a surprise for the *Banda* as well. Although they considered the insurrection primarily as an act of propaganda, it is possible that they expected a different reaction, considering the Bakunian ideas of autonomous jacquerie that had pushed them to action. Here, the words of the priest of Gallo may offer a window for understanding the inactivity of the peasants. In the town of Gallo, the *Banda* was accompanied by the town priest who assuaged the fears of the locals concerning the nature of the insurrection, saying, “Do not fear, change of government and some burning of papers, nothing more!”<sup>143</sup> These words harked back to the previous decade, when local brigands had made of town occupations a common practice. This suggests that the population of the Matese was familiar with insurrectionary deeds, and might have developed a “social ennui” after repeated political repressions. The suppressions of the period of brigandage had undoubtedly generated fear among the peasants, who had consequently honed their understanding of the essential “utility” of revolution.

This awareness of the peasants contravened Bakunin’s assessments about them. He believed that previous episodes of rebellion would make the peasantry more receptive to social revolution, insofar as brigandage had empowered the peasants in conducting autonomous uprisings. Although it is true that brigandage voiced the political needs of the peasantry, the repressions that followed left a considerable legacy on their future actions. Bakunin did correctly identify economic needs as primary motivations for the peasant revolution, but he disregarded the sense of self-preservation that pushed the peasantry to rebel in the first place. After the

---

<sup>141</sup> Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, 125.

<sup>142</sup> Forni, Chapter XII, 41.

<sup>143</sup> Della Peruta, “La Banda del Matese”, 375.

repressions set in motion by the State, the peasantry increasingly abandoned brigandage and the idea of revolution, for they perceived destructive consequences to be inevitable.

Malatesta recalled that he was unable to answer the peasants who argued that it was impossible to act to seize the land, for the town could not defend itself from the troops that would certainly come to massacre them all.<sup>144</sup> Malatesta attributed these statements of fear to the peasants' innate historical instinct to follow their masters and oppose change. Pernicone, instead, argued that "suspicion and fear – rooted in experience and common sense – generally combined to neutralize the "revolutionary" instincts of the Italian peasantry."<sup>145</sup> It is possible that the unfortunate timing of the anarchists, more than ten years after the suppression of Great Brigandage, led the peasants to consider their effort as "unworthy." Similarly, the support for brigandage had already diminished in the 1860s, after the government enacted martial law and financially incentivized the local populations to denounce the brigands. This decline suggests that the peasants had developed a certain aversion for revolution as a result of suppression, and chosen alternative ways to obtain their material objectives.

The *Banda's* "foreignness" opposed to the local peasant conservatism could have also hindered the success of their revolution. Except for Cafiero and Malatesta, the insurrectionaries were unable to communicate with the locals due to language barriers. Pernicone argues that this condition triggered xenophobic feelings among the peasants, who had possibly never met anyone outside of their communities.<sup>146</sup> Malatesta recalled that in Gallo a peasant challenged him to explain "how they could be sure that the revolutionaries were not police in disguise sent to spy on the peasants and arrest them if they rebelled."<sup>147</sup> These words suggest that the peasants

---

<sup>144</sup> Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, 126.

<sup>145</sup> Pernicone, 126.

<sup>146</sup> Pernicone, 125-6.

<sup>147</sup> Pernicone, 125-6.

associated outsiders, and particularly Northerners, with negative experiences. For example, General Enrico Cialdini, who ordered the massacre of Pontelandolfo and Casalduni about ten years before the *Banda* arrived, was from Modena, in Emilia-Romagna. Cialdini was the leader of the repression of Southern brigandage, and the people of the Matese knew him well, as he was stationed in Naples and employed his 50,000 men primarily in the regions of Campania and Basilicata.

On the other hand, the brigands that marauded the Matese countryside were from that area, and knew the population and its customs. The peasant celebrated the brigands as local heroes, and supported them because they promoted their immediate interests. Even if unlawful and brutal, the actions of the brigands were seen as liberatory and an act of “personal justice.”<sup>148</sup> Not only did the brigands work with the peasants, they also collaborated with the landowners by carrying out targeted assassinations and extortions. Their relationship with the gentry as well as the peasantry is indicative of their strong local support, which motivated them to serve their communities.

Brigands saw themselves as the people’s champions against the landlords and the foreigners. They guided the peasantry to rebellion, and their leadership was acknowledged by the insurgents, who lacked a benevolent authority figure after the Bourbons had capitulated. This collaboration between the brigands and the peasantry was successful in generating a mass revolution and almost sparking a war of liberation of the South.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, the *Banda*, which instead had a systematized plan for the Matese insurrection, did not take on leadership of the peasants because it was not part of their plan. They excessively idealized the destructiveness

---

<sup>148</sup> Law breakers were normalized in societies where conflict resolution worked outside the structures of the State. Therefore, extortions, killings, and violence did not upset the locals, who were used to “personal justice” mechanisms. Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth-century Italy: A Social History*, (Harlow: Pearsons Education Limited, 2002), 6

<sup>149</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, (Manchester: The University Press, 1959), 21.

of the peasantry, which they believed to be inherent and inevitable. In addition, the *Banda* spread socialist political propaganda in towns. While there is no record of the speech of Cafiero or Malatesta, sources reported that they explained the principles of socialism to the peasants in the squares of Letino and Gallo before leaving. This “theoretical” approach to revolution, combined with the lack of practical leadership, might have also estranged the peasantry, who needed a more “visual” propaganda to be convinced. The net difference in result between the brigands and the *Banda* suggests that the peasants needed a more pragmatic approach to revolution, as well as the presence of a leader to organize them.

Moreover, it is possible the *Banda del Matese* was simply late when carrying out their social revolution. As E.J. Hobsbawm argues, peasant revolutionary action is more likely to become a major phenomenon “at the moment when the jaws of the dynamic modern world seize the static communities in order to destroy and transform them.”<sup>150</sup> Seventeen years after Unification, the peasants were getting accustomed to having a new State, however much they resented it. By 1877, they arguably no longer felt the disruption of traditional order which sparked rebellions in 1861, even more so because in that year the government did not undertake any unsettling economic or political measure. The *Banda* hoped that their social revolution would become widespread; however, they did not find the social tension and disorder necessary to set off an uprising. The reduced hostility towards the State weakened the political reverberations of the *Banda*’s social revolution, which ultimately did not spark.

Jacquerie and revolution, as Hobsbawm claims, are not “against the fact that the peasants are poor and oppressed, but against the fact that sometimes they are *too* poor and oppressed.”<sup>151</sup> Brigandage in the Matese was a clear sign of this extreme deprivation. Exacerbated by sudden

---

<sup>150</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 24.

<sup>151</sup> Hobsbawm, 24.

destabilization of political order after Unification, brigandage made it clear that the Southern peasantry struggled to keep up with a modernizing nation. The failure of the *Banda* highlighted that the Southern peasantry possibly did not want to move towards this modernization, and preferred to live in the traditional world that they had fought hard to defend. Both positions were clear statements of political agency that defied the narratives of passivity, backwardness, and criminality that outsiders had attributed to the South. The rationality that the peasantry exercised in deciding to join or not to join a revolution also demonstrated their pragmatism and shrewdness, which they had acquired after centuries of oppression. Ultimately, while the Southern peasantry remained traditional in their attempts to restore or to maintain order, they were also extremely modern in acquiring a political consciousness that shaped their future attitude about the existing world.

## 5. Conclusion

The stories of the *Banda Giordano* and the *Banda del Matese* were only two drops in an ocean of post-Unification rebellions in the South. However, through their radically different outcomes, they exemplified an important feature of the Southern peasantry, that is, a sense of political consciousness. The Northern elites and ruling classes attempted to depoliticize the actions of the Southern peasantry to justify the problematic outcomes of Unification. In this way, the fight against brigandage became the battle between civilization and barbarism, reason and violence, humanity and inhumanity.<sup>152</sup> The innate revolutionary instincts that these narratives seemed to attribute to the Southern peasantry ultimately influenced the anarchists as well, who saw in the peasants the perfect catalyst for their social revolution. Instead, much to the surprise of the anarchists, the Matese peasants did not collaborate, demonstrating an unexpected perspicacity in their behavior, derived from years of bitter experience.

Both episodes hinted at the importance of identity within peasant communities as a primary factor on which they based their loyalty to revolutionary leaders. The Matese peasants seemed to place almost blind trust in the brigands, who they personally knew and admired. Unlike the State, brigands assumed the role of true “unifiers” that united the peasantry in a common cause against the Northern elites. Considering the doubts that the peasants of the Matese expressed about the origins and actions of the *Banda del Matese*, it is possible to assert that the anarchists were viewed on a par with the Piedmontese as foreigners, and that their

---

<sup>152</sup> John Dickie, “Stereotypes of the Italian South,” 122.

revolutionary message was perceived as just another political promise destined to disappoint them.

It is also true, however, that anarchy provided a more purely political ideology than brigandage. Brigandage as a social phenomenon remains difficult to evaluate, for its political message cannot be separated from its criminal character. While brigandage seemed almost an instinctive rebellion, anarchy had well defined theories and mechanisms with regards to political jacquerie. The failure that both movements nevertheless experienced can be ascribed to the reinforcement of the repressive institutions of the Italian State as well as to the surrender of the peasantry caused by their experiences of oppression and deprivation in the 1860s.

However, the readjustment of the peasantry to the new regime did not necessarily imply their compliance. The crisis of delegitimization that the Italian State entered as a result of these post-Unitary movements of dissent is still unfolding. Although the State has always been able to function at the basic level, it still has not obtained the “mass loyalty” of its citizens. Still today, the social and political legitimacy of the State institutions remains fragile in the South, where organized crime is still present and new forms of political dissent are emerging. In particular, the growing popularity of Neo-Bourbon movement has re-ignited the debate on the nature of brigandage in relation to the Southern peasantry. For the Neo-Bourbons, brigands were the true heroes of the South, who fell in the most noble battle of liberation against the invaders.<sup>153</sup> Thus, their commemoration of Unification does not reflect a positive pursuit of common national welfare, but instead comprises stories of massacres and colonization that victimized the Southern peasantry.

What this paper has tried to do is to invalidate this narrative, and present the Southern peasantry as a political actor in the history of Unification. The episodes analyzed in the Matese

---

<sup>153</sup> Movimento Neoborbonico, “Why We Are Neo-Bourbons,” 2005.

in 1861-1877, particularly the brigand revolts, were common throughout in the South in early post-Unification Italy. Thus, *mutatis mutandis*, it is possible to extend the rationality and the agency that the Matese peasants exhibited to the Southern peasantry as a whole. Their behavior defeats the common narrative of Southern colonization, and presents the peasantry in a new light of rich political consciousness and proactivity. In retrospect, centuries of troubled history have nurtured in the Southern people audacity and perspicacity. It is these sentiments that should still guide the South, for - as it is well known - the Southern Question is far from being resolved.

## Bibliography

- Accame, Giano, Giusto Benedetti, Giorgio Carlevaro et al. *Annali dell'Economia Italiana 1: 1861-1914*. Milano: Istituto IPSOA, 1985.
- Banfield, Edward C. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958.  
<https://coromandal.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/edward-C-banfield-the-moral-basis-of-a-backward-society.pdf>.
- Beales, Derek and Eugenio F. Biagini. *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2002.
- Blok, Anton. "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (1972): 494–503.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/178039>.
- Capone, Alessandro. "Il Brigantaggio Meridionale: Una rassegna Storiografica." *Le Carte e la Storia*, no 2 (2015): 32-39.  
[http://www.academia.edu/20579853/\\_Il\\_brigantaggio\\_meridionale\\_una\\_rassegna\\_storiografica\\_in\\_Le\\_Carte\\_e\\_la\\_Storia\\_2\\_2015\\_pp.\\_32-39](http://www.academia.edu/20579853/_Il_brigantaggio_meridionale_una_rassegna_storiografica_in_Le_Carte_e_la_Storia_2_2015_pp._32-39).
- . "Southern Rebels Against Italian Unification: the Great Brigandage in the Province of Capitanata." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22, no. 4 (2017): 431-449.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1354571X.2017.1350019>.
- Ceccarelli, Pietro Cesare. "Lettera di P.Cesare Ceccarelli ad A.Cipriani." In *La Banda del Matese 1876-1878*, edited by Bruno Tomasiello, 63-71. Casalvelino Scalo: Galzerano Editore, 2009.

- Chubb, Judith. *Patronage, Power, & Poverty in Southern Italy: A Tale of Two Cities*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Davis, John A. "The South and the Risorgimento: Histories and Counter-Histories." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 19, no. 1 (2014): 53-61. Taylor and Francis Journals.
- . "Casting Off the Southern Problem: or the Peculiarities of the South Reconsidered." In *Italy's "Southern Question."* *Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider, 202-224. Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- De Blasio, Abele. "Cosimo Giordano." Brigantaggio.net. 2017.  
<http://www.brigantaggio.net/brigantaggio/storia/CaporalCosimo01.htm>.
- De Matteo, Giovanni. *Brigantaggio e Risorgimento: Legittimisti e Briganti tra i Borbone e i Savoia*. Naples: Alfredo Guida Editore, 2000.
- Della Peruta, Franco. "La Banda del Matese e il Fallimento della Teoria Anarchica della Moderna "Jacquerie" in Italia." *Movimento Operaio* 6, no. 3 (1954): 337-384.
- Desiderio, Giancristiano. "#Pontelandolfo| Una lettera inedita del 1861: 'Perirono 13 persone.'" SannioPress. August 8, 2016. <http://www.sanniopress.it/2016/08/08/pontelandolfo-una-lettera-inedita-del-1861-perirono-13-persone/>.
- Dickie, John. "A Word at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage 1860-1870." *History Workshop*, no. 33 (1992): 1-24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289136>.
- . "Stereotypes of the Italian South, 1860-1900." In *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, edited by Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, 114-147. Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997.
- Di Lello, Rosario and Giuliano R. Palumbo, Brigantaggio sul Matese 1860-1880 (mostra storica promossa dall'Amministrazione Provinciale di Benevento - Museo del sannio nella Rocca

- dei Rettori Pontifici, marzo -giugno 1983). Piedimonte Matese: Edizioni Museo del Sannio - Tipografia Stampa Sud, 1983.
- Duggan, Christopher. *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796*. London: Penguin UK, 2007.
- Dunnage, Jonathan. *Twentieth-century Italy: A Social History*. Harlow. Pearsons Education Limited. 2002.
- [https://books.google.it/books?id=zj4npN1jfykC&pg=PA1&hl=it&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.it/books?id=zj4npN1jfykC&pg=PA1&hl=it&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Firnhaber-Baker, Justine. "The Eponymous Jacquerie: Making Revolt Mean Some Things." In *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*, edited by Justine Firnhaber-Baker, 1-42. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. [https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/13550/Firnhaber\\_Baker\\_EponymousJacqueriePREPUB\\_copy.pdf?sequence=1](https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/13550/Firnhaber_Baker_EponymousJacqueriePREPUB_copy.pdf?sequence=1).
- Forni, Eugenio. Chapter XII of *L'Internazionale e lo Stato*. In *La Banda del Matese 1876-1878*, edited by Bruno Tomasiello, 33-59. Casalvelino Scalo: Galzerano Editore, 2009.
- Francescangeli, Eros. "La Banda del Matese e Altri Colpi di Mano Internazionalisti." In *Gli italiani in guerra. Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, vol. 2, edited by Mario Isnenghi and Simon Levis Sullam, 127-132. Torino: UTET, 2009.
- Gasparini, Leone. *La "Banda del Matese." La Guerriglia nell'Italia Post-Unitaria*. Casalvelino Scalo: Galzerano Editore, 1983.
- Ginzburg, Carlo, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It." *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343946>.

- Gramsci, Antonio. *The Southern Question*. Translated by Pasquale Verdicchio. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005. <https://books.google.it/books?id=MSyprK1o6UgC>.
- Gribaudo, Gabriella. "Images of the South - the Mezzogiorno as Seen by Insiders and Outsiders." In *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, edited by Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, 83-113. Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997.
- Grifa, Antonio. *Il Brigantaggio Meridionale nella Stampa Clericale e Moderata*. Tesi di Laurea. Padova: Università degli Studi di Padova, 2008.  
[http://tesi.cab.unipd.it/21525/1/Il\\_brigantaggio\\_meridionale\\_nella\\_stampa\\_clericale\\_e\\_moderata\\_\(1861-1865\).pdf](http://tesi.cab.unipd.it/21525/1/Il_brigantaggio_meridionale_nella_stampa_clericale_e_moderata_(1861-1865).pdf).
- Hobsbawm, E.J. *Primitive Rebels*. Manchester: The University Press, 1959.  
<http://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Primitive-Rebels-Studies-in-Archaic-Forms-of-Social-Movement-in-the-19th-and-20th-Centuries-by-E.-J.-Hobsbawm.pdf>.
- Labanca, Ada. "Realtà Sociale e Dissensi Popolari nel Molise del Secondo Ottocento." In Luigi Parente, *Movimenti Sociali e Lotte Politiche nell'Italia Liberale: Il Moto Anarchico del Matese*, 195-232. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S. "Explaining Peasant Conservatism: The Western European Case." *British Journal of Political Science* 7, no. 4 (1977): 447-64.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/193299?seq=10#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/193299?seq=10#metadata_info_tab_contents).
- Merlino, S. "Camorra, Maffia and Brigandage." *Political Science Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1894): 466-85. doi:10.2307/2140146.
- Moe, Nelson. "The Emergence of the Southern Question in Villari, Franchetti, and Sonnino." In *Italy's Southern Question*, edited by Jane Schneider, 51-76. Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- Molfese, Franco. *Storia del brigantaggio dopo l'Unità*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1964.

- Morris, Jonathan. "Challenging Meridionalismo: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy." In *The New History of the Italian South. The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, edited by Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, 1-20. Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997.
- Movimento Neoborbonico, "Why We Are Neo-Bourbons," 2005.  
[http://www.neoborbonici.it/portal/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=227&Itemid=137](http://www.neoborbonici.it/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=227&Itemid=137).
- Narciso, Enrico. "Pontelandolfo e Casalduni." Brigantaggio.net. 2002.  
<http://www.brigantaggio.net/brigantaggio/storia/Casalduni7.htm#eccidio>.
- Parente, Luigi. "Economia e Società nel Sannio Post-Unitario." In *Movimenti Sociali e Lotte Politiche nell'Italia Liberale: Il Moto Anarchico del Matese*, edited by Luigi Parente, 165-194. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001.
- Pernicone, Nunzio. *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2009.
- Petrusewicz, Marta. "Before the Southern Question: "Native" Ideas on Backwardness and Remedies in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1815-1849." In *Italy's Southern Question*, edited by Jane Schneider, 27-49. Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- "Sergey Mikhailovic Stepnyak Kravčinskij." Publichnaya Biblioteka. 2018.  
[http://publ.lib.ru/ARCHIVES/S/STEPNYAK-KRAVCHINSKIY\\_Sergey\\_Mihaylovich/\\_Stepnyak-Kravchinskiy\\_S.M..html](http://publ.lib.ru/ARCHIVES/S/STEPNYAK-KRAVCHINSKIY_Sergey_Mihaylovich/_Stepnyak-Kravchinskiy_S.M..html)
- Russo, Flavio. *Dai Sanniti all'Esercito Italiano*. Roma: Stato Maggiore Esercito - Ufficio Storico, 1991.
- Sarlin, Simon. "Fighting the Risorgimento: Foreign Volunteers in Southern Italy (1860–63)." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2009): 476-90.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13545710903281987>.

- Sanguuolo, Luisa. "Caporal Cosimo." Brigantaggio.net. 2002.  
<http://www.brigantaggio.net/brigantaggio/storia/CaporalCosimo.htm#capo>.
- Savelli, Franco. "Il Meridione d'Italia." Storiologia.it. 2017.  
<http://www.storiologia.it/suditalia/cap109aa.htm>.
- Schneider, Jane. "Introduction: The Dynamics of Neo-Orientalism in Italy (1848-1895)." In *Italy's "Southern Question." Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schenider. 1-26. Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- Szijártó, István. "Four Arguments for Microhistory." *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (2002).  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.579.784&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
- Urbinati, Nadia. "The Souths of Antonio Gramsci and the Concept of Hegemony." In *Italy's Southern Question*, edited by Jane Schneider, 135-156. Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- Vigna, Marco. "Considerazioni sui fatti di Pontelandolfo e Casalduni." Nuovomonitorenapoletano.it. 23 March 2014.  
[http://www.nuovomonitorenapoletano.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1468:considerazioni-sui-fatti-di-pontelandolfo-e-casalduni&catid=85&Itemid=28](http://www.nuovomonitorenapoletano.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1468:considerazioni-sui-fatti-di-pontelandolfo-e-casalduni&catid=85&Itemid=28).
- Villani, Pasquale and Paolo Macry, *Storia d'Italia. Le Regioni IX: Campania*. Milano: Einaudi, 1990.
- Whelehan, Niall. *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World 1867–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.  
[https://books.google.it/books/about/The\\_Dynamiters.html?id=bf6o0P\\_h2ekC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.it/books/about/The_Dynamiters.html?id=bf6o0P_h2ekC&redir_esc=y).