

Space and Administrative Boundaries at the Birth of the Italian Kingdom

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In a letter to General Giacinto Carini dated 14 October 1860, count Cavour, expressing his satisfaction with the Sicilians' decision to abandon the idea of summoning a parliamentary assembly to ratify union with the monarchy of Vittorio Emanuele II and to accept a plebiscite, wrote: »None of the issues relating to the future internal system [have] any real immediate significance compared with the supreme and urgent need to make Italy first and establish it later«.¹

Cavour's statement, which has subsequently been frequently quoted and commented on,² is of interest not only because of the awareness that it demonstrates of the necessity and urgency to proceed rapidly with political unification in the face of a Europe »that was accustomed to expressing disbelief when the Italians spoke of union and concord«,³ but also because it alludes to the diverse nature of the two processes for creating a unified Italy: construction of the state and formation of the nation.

»Making Italy« and »constructing the state« are two sides of the same coin: they denote processes that are inextricably bound up with each other but also differ in many ways. They use different materials; they require different resources; and they operate in different

timeframes. In recent decades, in the wake of the new »culturalist« attention being devoted to the topic of the nation as an »imagined community«,⁴ it has above all been the first of these two processes that has been the catalyst for historiographical debate, with attention being focused on materials of extremely varied origin, frequently pre-political, which led to the construction of that »artificial object« which is the modern Italian nation. This means, however, that other ties of territorial belonging – municipal, regional-national, and state-related – that would remain alive and very powerful, notwithstanding the absorption of the peninsula's ancient state entities into the new national structure, have remained in the shadows and on the margins.⁵

Regarding the process of constructing the new unitary state, it becomes necessary to forge a reinterpretation that attempts to combine the realization of aspirations to unity with the political and administrative organization of the former states (»antichi Stati«) that had to yield. We should not forget that the new single state was born from the ashes of seven other states that ceased to exist politically and legally. What remained of the administrative and legal structure of these states that was inherited by the new state under construction? How were

the previous state borders compressed into the internal administrative divisions of the new political structure?

The intention is therefore to propose a reading of the process of building the unitary Italian state which takes into account the ›multinational character‹ of the peninsula's history as well as the plurality of the administrative structures and traditions of the former states which merged, with their peculiarities, into the new state.

I will not review the normative and institutional profiles of the administrative order of the Kingdom of Italy, which took shape in step with the gradual realization of political unification. These features are widely known thanks to the now-classic studies carried out on the occasion of the first centenary of national unification.⁶ Instead, I consider it more useful to re-read them from multiple perspectives, from the centre and the periphery – or rather from the many centres and peripheries that participated in the process of forming a united Italy. I will try to consider the wide array of administrative traditions that contributed to the foundation of the new state, albeit through different methods, levels of intensity, and speeds. I shall attempt to give new value and significance to the differences in ›identity‹ and belonging – to the municipal polyphony – that is a feature of the peninsula's entire history. I will reconsider the complex process of territorial assemblage that construction of the new single state involved. I shall pursue this task without undervaluing, diminishing or – worse still – challenging and delegitimizing the process of political unification, as was the case on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, which gave rise to ›neo-Bourbon‹ and ›Venetianist‹ interpretations.

When in the aforementioned letter Cavour speaks of the ›need to make Italy‹, he is therefore referring to the urgent necessity of achieving political and diplomatic recognition of the new Italian state. This state emerged without the convening of a constituent assembly, by way of annexation legitimized through plebiscites, very much in line with the Sardinian-Piedmontese experience of statehood, whose main institutions, starting from the founding act, the Albertine Statute of 1848, were extended to the new political formation of the Kingdom of Italy. The Piedmontese statesman felt, however, that establishing Italy ›later‹ should be a long-term endeavour aimed at instilling or consolidating a sentiment of identification with a single nation into the former subjects of the old

Italian states. In his view, this was needed to overcome the ›multinational character‹ that had traditionally marked the history of the peninsula. Building the state was therefore an urgent matter that could not be delayed; the new nation was a necessity that should be entrusted to the new parliament and the new institutions, educational ones first and foremost, of a single Italian state.

In the first section of this article, I will provide a brief overview of the connection between geography and politics in the period of national revival, as it emerges from the analyses conducted by geographers and politicians involved in the process of national and state unification. The second will be devoted primarily to the multiplicity of regional and state spaces which merged, not without difficulties, into the new unitary state, giving rise to the territorial imbalances which still persist on the peninsula even today. In the third, I will discuss the territorial and administrative division of the new state, that is to say, the question of the administrative constituencies, with all its contradictions. My aim is to make visible the fundamental issues relating to the spatial and administrative structure of the new unified state – issues that arose at its inception and during the early years following unification, but would remain unresolved throughout its subsequent history.

Geography and Politics

Napoleon's reflections on the ›singular‹ geographical configuration of the Italian peninsula from his exile on St Helena still make interesting reading. His secretary, Emmanuel de Las Cases, describes him on his hands and knees on a large map of Italy spread out on the floor, intent on measuring distances. In addition to noting the exceptional length and limited width of the country, both geographic features that impacted on its political destiny, the former emperor was struck by the clarity and certainty of its ›natural borders‹, which were all either maritime or, in the case of its sole land border, marked by the mighty semi-circle of the Alps, the easiest to defend ›of all [...] the European borders‹.⁷ These geographical considerations would be widely circulated during the Risorgimento. The words of one of the fathers of the movement, Giuseppe Mazzini, for whom Italy was the ›best-defined country in Europe‹, are a good example:

In other lands with more uncertain or interrupted borders, questions may arise that will one day be resolved by a peaceful vote of all, but which have cost, and will perhaps continue to cost, more tears and blood; as regards yours, no. God has provided Italy with sublime, indisputable borders: on one side the highest mountains in Europe, the Alps, and on the other, the sea, the immense sea. Take a compass, fix one point in the north of Italy, at Parma, and the other at the mouth of the Varo, and trace a semicircle towards the Alps. When you have made a semicircle, the point that falls at the mouth of the Isonzo will have completed the frontier that God gave Italy. Up to that frontier the Italian language is spoken and understood; beyond it, you have no claim.⁸

Mazzini's words show, on the one hand, the power of the theory of a natural border⁹ in the context of the Risorgimento, and on the other, the pedagogical, educational, and moral values associated with geographical discourse at that time. The geophysical and natural foundation of the unity of Italy emerges very clearly from writings on geography and from maps and statistics of the period. We only need to consider the early writings of Adriano Balbi, in which he traced the »line of its natural borders«, which were »seas, rivers, and mountains«,¹⁰ or the works of Cesare Correnti and Pietro Maestri, which paid closer attention to the internal divisions or subdivisions of the Italian territory. Particularly Correnti, an important geographer, statistician, and politician, reflected with great acuity on the geographical features of the peninsula and their nexus with political unity. Writing on Italy's borders in his popular almanac »Il Nipote del Vesta-Verde«, which he founded and wrote almost entirely by himself, Correnti began thus:

There are artificial countries whose geography is merely a historical patchwork or hodgepodge, and there are natural countries, whose history, while it may overflow with turbulent events, finally settles between its borders and obeys the divine right of the land. Our Italy, after the Iberian Peninsula, is the best-channelled and most organic region of the European continent [...]. The lands occupied by the Italic race are the only ones that possess all their waters from source to mouth; they are the only ones

that in the multitude of varieties of their aspects and climates maintain the mark of imposing unity.¹¹

That geography provided political discourse and the creation of the Italian nation with solid anchorage is attested by the significance that representations of the territory and their circulation through cartography – especially on a small scale – assumed for the construction of a national identity (which has remained somewhat weak, in truth) and the establishment of a spirit of belonging. The image of Italy and the unitary representation of its territory, where political and natural borders are one and the same, became a powerful channel of communication for patriotism at the time of the Risorgimento. It was able to provide an evocative indication of the objective of national unification to a country characterized by extreme variety, profound territorial imbalances, and ancient political divisions.¹²

The other great issue that animated political debate and practice during the Risorgimento, that is, the question of where the capital should be located, was also linked to the physical and political geography of the country. Once again, it was Napoleon who emphasized the problem of identifying the capital of the future united Italy which, although its regions had »much more in common« compared with countries that had already achieved political union, such as the »various British kingdoms«, »lacks central cities due to the manner in which it is configured«.¹³ For a variety of reasons that can essentially be traced back to geopolitical and strategic considerations, none of the cities considered by Napoleon seemed to correspond to the requirements for a capital: neither Rome, nor Milan, nor Bologna, nor Florence, nor Genoa or Venice. Ultimately, the country's distinctive geographical layout hindered the identification of a city that would be able to act as the centre of gravity of the Italian political system.

Moreover, the lack of centrality that is a feature of the peninsula from a geographical perspective had to be considered together with the large number of cities that enjoyed the role and status of capitals of their respective states prior to political unification. This number began to be dramatically reduced immediately after the political restructuring sanctioned by the Congress of Vienna, and it continued gradually as the process of formation of the unified state progressed, starting with

Genoa, Venice, and Palermo, and continuing with Milan, Parma, Modena, Florence, and Naples. To this loss of importance, which preceded the more general restructuring of the urban and spatial hierarchy in the various territories, must be added the rapid transfer of the capital which happened on two occasions between the proclamation of the kingdom of Italy and the completion of political unification with the conquest of Rome.

The issue of the capital was also closely associated with the political solution that was determined to be most appropriate, or fitting, to the history of the country for the purposes of accomplishing unification. Those who were in favour of federal or confederal solutions proposed projects for the organization of the new state more focused on the morphological features of the peninsula and its political history. While certain aspects of these projects were of interest, others were wholly fanciful and extravagant, proposing a bipartite or tripartite subdivision of Italy¹⁴ in which, besides an unworkable system of territorial trade-offs and compensations for dispossessed dynasties,¹⁵ a number of capital cities were proposed that would host various political functions. One example of this is provided by the »Anonimo Lombardo«, a name that concealed the identity of Luigi Torelli; his proposal provided for two capital cities for each of the three kingdoms into which Italy would be divided, one of which would be the seat of the executive and the courts, the other the seat of the representative power, or National Congress. This proposal was dictated, wrote Torelli, by the need to preclude potential rivalries between cities disputing the role of capital of the kingdom, and to create a healthy spirit of cooperation.¹⁶ Two years before Torelli, Cesare Balbo had conveyed the anomaly of the Italian situation with extreme clarity, emphasizing the problems associated with identifying a political centre:

It is a dream to hope that even one capital city would wish to be reduced to a provincial town; a greater dream that six should be reduced to one; and the greatest dream of all is that the six might agree to choose which one. This is not desirable either for the six cities making the choice or for the one that is chosen, nor for the nation as a whole. There is a cry across the whole of Europe (whether rightly or wrongly is of no importance), a cry from everywhere

*almost unanimously against large capital cities, against what is called centralization of governments, interests, and wealth, against the despoliation of the provinces. And would anyone with seven capitals dispossess six of them in favour of one? To hope for such a thing is not a dream, but madness.*¹⁷

By contrast, the supporters of unification immediately identified the strategic objective: to achieve political unification, which could not but be linked to the conquest of the eternal city, Rome, where the seat of the new capital of the kingdom could and had to be located. In one of the first sessions of the new national parliament, Rodolfo Audinot from Bologna presented an interpellation in the Chamber of Deputies on the »Roman question« that would inspire a lively debate on Rome as the capital. For Audinot, »Rome needs Italy« and »Italy needs Rome« because »the entire nation cannot be governed forever from this distant strip of Italy«, meaning Turin, and because »Rome as the capital city of Italy is the highest expression of the unity and independence of the nation«.¹⁸ These considerations were repeated by Cavour in one of his most incisive speeches. In his opinion, the identification of the capital of a state was »to be determined by high moral reasons« rather than climatic, topographical or strategic ones. For Cavour:

*All the historical, intellectual, and moral situations that must determine the conditions for the capital of a great State come together in Rome. Rome is the only city in Italy that does not have exclusively municipal memories; the entire history of Rome, from the time of the Caesars until today, is that of a city whose importance extends far beyond its own territory, of a city which is destined to be the capital of a great State.*¹⁹

In the context of the parliamentary debate inspired by Audinot's interpellation, one of the first acts following the proclamation of the kingdom, the Boncompagni agenda, was proposed. A good ten years before the breach of Porta Pia, this agenda, which supported Cavour's policy and was approved »almost unanimously«, as the minutes of the parliamentary session report, requested that Rome, »the capital acclaimed by public opinion«, be re-joined with Italy.²⁰

Underlying the relationship between geography and politics to which I have pointed here in relation to the processes of political unification and redefinition of urban hierarchies is a more general question, one whose roots may be found in the debates that took place in the French revolutionary Constituent Assembly on the creation of the departments as the basic units of a new administrative division of the national space.²¹ I am referring to the relationship between natural space and political space. The first of these notions here means a territory that is circumscribed precisely and recognizably by physical features such as mountain ranges or river basins; the second is understood as the rigidly geometrical and uniform subdivision of the new revolutionary national space, in contrast to the manifold differences and territorial privileges which prevailed under the Ancien Régime. This distinction was also clearly present in Italian political debates starting in the Jacobin period, and was not confined to geographers alone; the latter, as well as many of the thinkers of the Risorgimento, looked upon physical or natural space as the determining factor for the creation of political spaces – although, in the Italian case, the history of territories and the urban network played a more important role, and by no means a secondary one as they did in France. This spatial determinism in geographical discourse also had to come to terms with the urgent necessity of organizing the state and creating administrative divisions. The process of national unification took place under exceptional circumstances, with the concession of plenary powers to the king and his government and the concomitant closure of the parliament. This led to political decisions marked by a strong continuity with the territorial and administrative boundaries of the former states, by the extension to the national level of the organizational options tested in the Sardinian kingdom, and by myriad territorial contrasts resulting from an atavistic localism that opposed political plans to restructure administrative constituencies in some areas and to change provincial urban hierarchies.

The Italian historiography of the process of political unification has devoted little, if any, attention to the territorial factor, which is closely linked to the measurement of space and the collection of statistical data. In light of the recent historiographical trends of the ›spatial turn‹ and of ›border studies‹, it seems to me that it

can be very useful to give increased consideration to the profound influence of the spatial dimension, and especially to the social and political construction of space. This will provide us with a better understanding of the complexity and the historicity of the processes by which political and administrative spaces are constructed, such as those that took place during Italian unification.

One and Plural

In a wide-ranging analytical portrait of the political and administrative situation of the Italian Kingdom written at the end of the first unitary parliament,²² Leopoldo Galeotti describes the singular situation in which the new unified state found itself the day after its proclamation thus:

*We had as many legislations, administrations, and budgets, as there were former States composing the new Kingdom. This confusion was further increased by the innovations brought about by the Cabinet with Full Powers to the legal systems of the former provinces and Lombardy, and by those that were introduced by the provisional governments in Emilia, the Marche, Umbria, and the southern provinces, where the circumstances and the hatred for the past had rapidly led to the immediate promulgation of quite a number of the Piedmontese laws. Only Tuscany remained immune to these improvised reforms, [but] because of its autonomy, it contributed to an increase in the confusion. [...] To this must be added the little or no knowledge that we have of each other, of our reciprocal business and of our own affairs.*²³

The words of the Tuscan liberal very clearly illustrate the peculiar, confused situation in the country, with its plurality of political formations brought together within the new state structure, and the disorder that had intensified during the crucial years of the national unification process. The situation was made even more complicated by the very limited knowledge of the various political and administrative – and socio-economic – realities that had given life to the new unified state. From a political standpoint, unification was not completed by convening a constituent assembly (notwithstanding the vote by Lombardy in far-off 1848 which had been approved by the

Subalpine Parliament); it was carried out and legitimized through adhesion or annexation to the Piedmontese constitutional monarchy by means of a plebiscite. Administratively speaking, on the other hand, it was not accomplished until 1865, again through the use of exceptional procedures, after the signing of the September Convention, which led to the transfer of the capital from Turin to Florence. At this point, the new municipal and provincial law, the first law of administrative unification, was also extended to Tuscany, which had enjoyed a fleeting autonomy up to that time. After all, how could the capital be transferred to Florence without resolving the anomaly of Tuscany's administration, which had persisted since the Kingdom had been proclaimed? This was openly acknowledged by Francesco Restelli, who had introduced in parliament the Lanza Bill on administrative unification, which also requested parliament to delegate the restructuring of administrative districts to the government:

Although Tuscany lies at the centre of the Kingdom, legislatively speaking it is the most isolated province in Italy, the one that least experiences the administrative life of the rest of Italy. Tuscany has its own municipal and provincial laws and its own Council of State. It has its own public safety law, and its own laws for the administration of public works. It would be highly indecent, and a truly repugnant spectacle, if the laws for the implementation of which measures are provided were not in force in the place from which the most significant measures for the good government of the public body for the whole of Italy originate.²⁴

A revisitation of the construction process of the new national state that takes account of the extraordinary diversity of the political forms merged into that state cannot, however, start from its outcome, that is, from the achievement of political and administrative unification and the simultaneous expansion of the Franco-Napoleonic administrative model, as reinterpreted during the Sardinian-Piedmontese experience of the Restoration. On the contrary, it must encompass a broader diachronic horizon that starts from what might rightfully be considered the decisive turning point as regards administrative organization and the propulsion towards unification in the Italian peninsula: that is, the ›triennio rivoluzionario‹ and the subsequent Napoleonic era.

It is not possible here to review the controversy at that time – which is still current today – between unitarists and federalists,²⁵ behind which the contrast between the idealistic motives of the latter and the realism of the former regularly re-emerges. Rather, I will dwell on the diversity and variety of the political situation in the peninsula and on the nexus between territory and administration in relation to the creation of the political-administrative space of unified Italy; or to be more precise, on the topic, »as important as it is neglected«,²⁶ of the administrative districts during the transition from the old states to the new Kingdom of Italy.

From this perspective, the case of Italy offers aspects of special interest for the study of administrative divisions: pre-unification state pluralism, the weight of the various administrative traditions, the differing political and constitutional roles of municipalities in the former Italian states, regional imbalances in territorial organization, a peculiar national unification process that actually consisted in a simple expansion of Sardinian-Piedmontese institutions and organizational models – these are all more than adequate to justify the renewed attention that is being paid to the question of the territorial and administrative districts of the new national state.²⁷

In an age of national states, the position of those promoting the unitary solution had an unquestionable advantage over the supporters of a federation, given the circumstances and forces in the field. Mazzini himself declared that he would even accept a monarchy if this made it possible to achieve the unification of Italy, and – referring to the long-standing formula of Aragonese constitutionalism – stated: »Create Italy and I am with you. If you do not, I am not«.²⁸ Being a ›unitarist‹ did not, however, necessarily mean being in favour of political and administrative centralization. This was made very clear by Senator Carlo Matteucci, among others, when he issued an invitation not »to confuse unification with centralization: we have to avoid being dragged into establishing a form of government that is not rooted in our traditions, and that would not fit our intellects and our inclinations«. Matteucci, who was a convinced supporter of political unification, condemned the project to build »a great capital and a great administrative centre« that would, in his opinion, lead to a contraction in the »peoples of the peninsula, as if everyone came from the same mould, all cut from the same pattern, maybe not

even a native one«. He claimed that it was necessary to proceed with the creation of a system of »administrative decentralization« that consisted in allocating »all those administrative functions that are currently pointlessly divided among the various existing Councils, with a great loss of time and money«, to the provinces, which there was no need to create because »they exist naturally«.²⁹

Matteucci's considerations on the new Kingdom's political organization would make Carlo Cattaneo feel less isolated, and would induce him, in his famous prologue to the 9th volume of the »Politecnico«, to firmly condemn the »doctrine of absolute centralization« that had established itself in Italy with the extension of the Rattazzi Law to Lombardy and the newly-annexed provinces. Cattaneo was not happy with the administrative decentralization proposed by Matteucci, to whom he objected that »if there is in Italy a social entity called the province of Pisa or Cremona, there is also a larger and no less real entity called Tuscany, Lombardy, or Sicily, and each of these states or united kingdoms is not a merely administrative body, but also includes a complete legislative structure«. Nonetheless, the spirit that inspired his reflections was very close to that of Matteucci when he suggested that the progress made in certain Italian states in the areas of legislation and administration should be taken into account and used, instead of reducing its effect. It is helpful to reread this extremely well-known passage:

No account whatsoever was taken of the fact that for centuries, the provinces have been grouped into legislative systems based on fundamentally different principles, which represent very diverse degrees of civilization in the individual states of the peninsula and the three islands. Thus, while in the Roman States, Sardinia, Sicily, and Corsica many traditions from medieval times survive, Tuscany in many respects, and Lombardy in certain others, are truly at the forefront of progress. [...] Piedmont, however, although it concentrated a century's worth of progress into six months, was inferior to Tuscany with regard to criminal law, to Parma as to civil law, and to Lombardy in the area of municipal systems; it had the misfortune of bringing new laws to its people in the guise of a benefit that they greeted, however, as a nuisance and harm. Sensible people found it to be disgraceful that the population should prefer Austrian to Italian laws,

*but they were not able to see that the real disgrace was that Italian laws might appear to be inferior to the Austrian ones.*³⁰

During this same period, this standpoint was endorsed – albeit without Cattaneo's broad political horizons – by the editor of the »Annali universali di statistica«, Giuseppe Sacchi, who, writing on the work of the Piedmontese, issued this categorical condemnation:

*These inexpert legislators did not even want to know about the institutions that governed the new provinces, and believing that they had been rendered savage by a savage foreign government, treated them in the same manner as that in which the French believed they could treat conquered Algeria [...]. The administrative system [which had existed in Lombardy until that time] could have, and should have, been respected by Rattazzi's cabinet – at least for some time – but [...] it wanted to lay its hands on everything, and without taking account of the good and the bad, sought to restructure public affairs in its own way, deeply disgusting all ranks of citizens.*³¹

In the context of Italian administrative unification, the annexation of Lombardy and the extension to it of the Piedmontese system of administration is of exemplary and paradigmatic value. Initially, a commission was created consisting of representatives of moderate Lombard liberalism, charged with the task of establishing the measures most appropriate for reconciling the particular Lombard administrative tradition with the Piedmontese system,³² and a provisional system was designed for Lombardy, which was introduced in June 1859. However, it remained in force only a few months, and the Sardinian-Piedmontese »Municipal and Provincial Law«, known as the Rattazzi Law after the Minister of the Interior who had promoted it under the regime of royal plenary powers, was immediately extended and applied to Lombardy. »Finis Langobardiae«, commented Cesare Correnti at the time, with the bitterness of a Lombard witnessing the end of »one of the most organic regions in Europe«, but with an Italian's hope of seeing the disappearance of »all the sub-nationalities, just as the most illustrious and the oldest of them is disappearing today«.³³ The pro-Lombardy faction, which believed that it could claim an especially

efficient local administration representing the interests of the community, suffered, however, from a significant limitation: how could it support the Habsburg local administration when it had fought, and would continue to fight, the war for independence and national unity against the power of the Habsburgs? It was precisely this underlying contradiction that provided Rattazzi with the opportunity to insist that the Napoleonic Italian Kingdom's »administrative system« was to be preferred.³⁴

The Lombard local government applied a Theresian model and was based on the institution of the »convocati« (literally, »the summoned«), that is, the general assembly of »estimati«, or landowners. Its superiority over the Sardinian-Piedmontese system had been acknowledged even in Piedmontese liberal circles; in a letter to his wife, count Giulini wrote that Cavour had confided in him that »he well knew that at the time the two countries were on the point of being joined together, Piedmont had more to learn as regards administrative systems than it had to teach«.³⁵ To the administrative treatment which had been reserved for Lombardy, and had provoked such unrest and discontent among moderate Lombard liberals, Cavour also referred in the parliamentary debate on the transfer of Nice and Savoy, indicating that the cabinet had taken the errors of the past into account.³⁶

After Lombardy, the Rattazzi Law, which maintained the Franco-Napoleonic administrative system basically unchanged, was also extended to the former states that were annexed between 1859 and 1861.³⁷ The only exception was the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, to which, despite Cavour's speech of May 1860 – which was intended to reassure the parliamentary opposition that the law would be passed rapidly in the rest of the country – the Kingdom's administrative regime was only extended by the unification law of 1865. Tuscany's opposition to »piemontesismo«, which was described as »the habit of imposing Piedmontese legislation on the new provinces instead of Italianizing Piedmont using the laws that are in force in different parts of Italy, and which in many areas are wiser«,³⁸ and its stout defence of the Leopoldine administrative traditions made it an »anomaly« during the transitional regime. Behind Cavour's growing aversion to decentralization was the early work of Ricasoli, at the time when he was governor-general in Tuscany during the lieutenancy of the Prince of Carignano.³⁹ Irritated by Ricasoli's striving for recognition, and anxious to eliminate

the »state within a state«⁴⁰ that Tuscany had become, the prime minister moved increasingly decisively in the direction of policies of strict centralization, although it would be the »Neapolitan question« above all that finally tipped the balance towards administrative centralization.

A dynamic similar to the one that occurred at the time of the annexation of Lombardy also took place in 1866 on the annexation of Veneto, which was the first region to be included in the Kingdom following enactment of the administrative unification law. As in Lombardy, there was widespread discontent in Veneto, and in this case too, a commission was appointed, presided by Cesare Correnti, who had previously been a member of the Giulini Commission – but no representatives from Veneto were included in it. In an editorial dated 15 October 1866, before Italian troops arrived in Veneto, the »Gazzetta di Venezia« warned of the risks of a pure, uncritical extension of the Piedmontese administrative system:

It is a well-known fact that the capital error that led the Italian administration to such an unhappy result, which has been portrayed in every newspaper and by public opinion, was to suppress all the administrative laws and institutions that had functioned in the annexed States for so many years, and to introduce the Piedmontese administrative system everywhere.⁴¹

In the opinion of the journalist, the mistake was to have believed that it would be possible to administer a large structure such as the new Italian state by applying tools that had been used to administer the small Piedmontese kingdom:

The cabinet governing Piedmont at the time of the annexations [...] applied the laws of a small State to a grand Monarchy. The evidence escaped it, its eyes became tired in its attempt to see everything as it had seen things in Piedmont, and it became blind, and no longer saw anything. [...] Veneto, especially in certain areas of public service, has an excellent administration. Let us therefore move slowly, very slowly, in demolishing its administrative system. Let us study it well, let us look wisely at how its machinery works, [...] and thereafter let us apply various of its administrative rules in the other provinces. What is good must be taken wherever it can be found, and it should not

*be believed that the administration is entirely Austrian here. We have many Italian laws and regulations in force, and many norms that have been working excellently here for years were completely unknown in Austria.*⁴²

One and Divisible

Theories on the territorial division of the Italian peninsula had been proposed even before its political unification was completed. These proposals were closely associated with the various views on the form that the new state should assume – unitary, federal, or confederal –, and were initially put forward in order to identify an adequate and realistic response to the problems of achieving national unification. In particular, these theories were suggested by a number of geographers and politicians who were in some way protagonists of the national unification process, and whose attention was focused more closely on the morphological and geopolitical features of the peninsula.

Of interest here are the observations of Carlo Frulli in 1845 on the geographical division of Italy, which have recently been brought to our attention again by Lucio Gambi. Frulli, who was from Bologna, was not at all interested in the political and jurisdictional divisions of the peninsula. He declared from the outset that he wanted to »proceed with a more regular physical division which, in order that it may be considered natural, we wish to be based solely on the orography and hydrography of our beautiful country«.⁴³ In so doing, he identified »the first, most natural, and greatest division of Italy into three vast parts«, which he designated »versanti«, or mountain slopes: the Alpine, western, and eastern. Because they could not constitute an optimal division of the peninsula's territory due to their great expanse, they were subdivided into »clivi«, »circumscribed by natural borders and identified, like the former, by physical prerogatives and solely orographical and hydrographical peculiarities«.⁴⁴ Through this process, Frulli identified and defined 21 »clivi« which in turn, however, due to their excessively large or small size were not equally suitable for an »appropriate, well-proportioned Italian region«; his consequent proposal was therefore to join the seven smallest »clivi« to those adjacent to them, thereby giving form to »the physical

regions of our peninsula«, which were thus reduced to fourteen in number, to which were added the three largest islands, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica.⁴⁵

Entirely different was the work of Cesare Correnti, in the early 1850s and thereafter, to identify more homogeneous and solid regional areas.⁴⁶ The criteria that he used to subdivide the peninsula were not exclusively geographical, despite affirmations to the contrary;⁴⁷ they also took account of data drawn from demographics and statistics, as well as considerations of a historical and political nature. Correnti was highly aware of the delicate and complex nature of any political and administrative division or territorial distinction,⁴⁸ and he therefore used a composite set of criteria to subdivide what he described as the »best defined [and] most richly-articulated geographical region« in the world, the essential feature of which appeared to him from the outset to be »maximum unity within maximum variety«.⁴⁹ The regional divisions, of which there were initially sixteen named after their geo-natural features,⁵⁰ were increased to nineteen in the second of his relevant articles, significantly entitled »Casa nostra« (»Our House«), with the addition of other territories, some of which would only belatedly become part of the Italian nation, such as the »Northern Frontier. The High Valley of the River Adige (Bressanone and Trento)«, the »Middle Apennine-Eridanian Valley, the territory that descends from the Ligurian and Tuscan Appennines to the River Po (Parma, Piacenza, Reggio and Modena)«, and finally, the island of Malta.

In addition to the fact that the regional divisions delineated by Correnti would, after later adjustments, give rise to the statistical »compartments« of the country, what is to be underlined is his awareness of the partiality of his administrative system and of its imprecise correspondence to the requirements of the future unified state. He was also acutely aware, and would become even more so thereafter, of the differences and dissimilarities that characterized the numerous states of the peninsula, also from a jurisdictional and administrative point of view:

The administrative organization of the peninsula is highly irregular, exactly like the political one. Altogether, the thirteen states and semi-states into which Italy is divided comprise 110 provinces, 495 districts, and 10,041 municipalities. These provinces,

districts, and municipalities have nothing like the same economic and political value, however. The fifteen provinces of the Bourbon lands on this side of the River Faro have an average population of 440,000 each, and therefore can be compared with the Piedmontese divisions and the French departments. The seven provinces of Sicily are somewhat less populous, and above all smaller. Both the first and the second are, however, subdivided into 77 districts with an average population of over 100,000, which cannot be compared in any way with the 127 small districts into which Lombardy is divided, the average population of which does not exceed 22,000. The Neapolitan districts, on the other hand, can be equated with the 50 provinces of Sardinia, because both have 100,000 inhabitants each. The 14 divisions of the Sardinian States, however, match the Neapolitan provinces and the French departments. In no part of Italy does a district have so productive a character as those of Lombardy and Venice: this is the fruit of fiscal institutions that are absent in almost all the other Italian states. As regards municipalities, there is a very large difference between our small ones, which have an average population of a little over 1,000, and those in southern Italy, whose population is almost 3 times larger. [...] The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, for example, which has a population of approximately 9,000,000, has only 3,241 communes, no more than 2,158 of which are rural municipalities and villages. If we consider Sicily alone, where the agrarian system of Imperial Rome remains in force, we only find 517 villages, which is four times fewer than in the larger territory of Lombardy. Aggregations of buildings are four times more populous, and three-fifths of them (321) have maintained the grand title of »city«. [...] Whenever we talk about a province, a district, or a municipality, therefore, we must specify exactly to what part of Italy we are referring. Because the economic and administrative system varies so greatly from town to town, the similarity of names leads to misunderstanding more than anything else.⁵¹

As noted previously, this moment in time was not only foundational as regards the administrative fabric of the nascent unitary state, but was also linked to the subsequent creation of the statistical divisions on the basis

of which the first census of the population of the Kingdom was carried out.⁵² Their authors were Correnti and above all Pietro Maestri, who were leading representatives of what has been called »patriotic statistics«⁵³ and were both extremely attentive to topography and geography.⁵⁴ Correnti would also become president of the Italian Geographical Society, besides having promoted it in his capacity as Minister for Public Education. Many high-ranking statisticians and geographers occupied themselves with territorial studies in Italy in the first half of the 19th century. They included the already mentioned Adriano Balbi and Attilio Zuccagni-Orlandini, the author of the monumental »Corografia fisica, storica e statistica dell'Italia e delle sue isole«, which was published over the course of ten years between 1835 and 1845,⁵⁵ and professor of statistics at the newly-created Istituto di Studi Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento in Florence in 1860.

In the 1864 edition of the »Annuario statistico Italiano«, and particularly in an extensive section devoted to »Topography«, Correnti and Maestri reviewed the administrative divisions of the former states of the peninsula, comparing them to the territorial division of the new Kingdom. In their view, the Kingdom was characterized by a worrisome confusion that had resulted in a veritable »territorial labyrinth«, which was also due to the work of the ministers who had succeeded one another at the various ministries in the early years of unification. For Correnti and Maestri,

There would be as many administrative topographies as there are ministries, and even this would not be enough, because, for example, the Ministry of Finance has divided the Kingdom into five regions for public debt, into six for legal consultations on disputes, into fourteen for land registries, into eighteen for the Treasury Offices, into twenty-seven for the Offices of Indirect Taxation, and into fifty for the administration of state-owned land. In addition, there are various sub-departments of these regional divisions that are also diverse and overlap in various ways.

In their view, the picture that emerged from the territorial and administrative analysis of the divisions was a result of the »lack of agreement on the criteria that had led to the reform or conservation of the territorial districts«; this deficiency »caused very great inconvenience

in every part of the administration, and even greater inconvenience to citizens, who have not found a guide to proceed through this tangle of jumbled divisions lacking any clear design».⁵⁶

In the contemporaneous »Statistica del Regno d'Italia«, the official publication of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Maestri, as director of the Central Office of Statistics, explained what the term »statistical districts« should be taken to mean, and clarified the procedure by which they had been identified. It is helpful to consider the reasoning he set forth:

It was difficult for us to conduct comparisons between one province and another without a framework through which the natural relationships among the various provinces due to their proximity, similarities in physical make-up, similar economic complexity, or common civil traditions could be coordinated. We were therefore induced to group provinces together primarily on the basis of their topographical cohesion, which inevitably determines economic correlation and correspondence, and secondly on that of the moral and civil traditions of the various parts of Italy. These groups, which we will call »Compartments«, may perhaps evoke the image either of the former States into which our country was divided, or of the Regions into which some analysts considered that the national territory might appropriately be separated. Those who consider our idea closely will be persuaded, however, that our concept is based neither on the painful vestiges of a past that we hope is now irrevocably gone, nor on the now rejected preconceptions of administrative federalism. As we have already stated, our Compartments are topographical, or, in a word, statistical; they merely reproduce territorial divisions based on the nature of the land and the laws of economic cohabitation, divisions that since ancient times and in the mediaeval era did not correspond to political borders, nor to the even more changeable administrative districts, but which had a very different, more solid, foundation in the laws of distance, movement, and labour.⁵⁷

Maestri's brief but dense introduction is entirely focused on dispelling any suspicion that the statistical compartments might in some way reproduce the peninsula's old

political divisions, and emphasizing that the identification of fourteen »great compartments of the Kingdom« into which statistical data would be divided was not »a definitive, scientific division of the national territory«, not even »from a purely statistical and economic standpoint«. On the contrary, he claimed, »it will not be possible to achieve a final definition of the economic and statistical compartments until topographical, meteorological, and agronomic studies have matured«.

In his pioneering work on the Italian administrative fabric and regional system over the long term, Lucio Gambi, analyzing the writings and works of Correnti and Maestri, identified the underlying »misunderstanding« of administrative geography in Italy, which consisted in confusion and overlap between statistical compartments⁵⁸ and constitutional regions and the absence of an organic, overall design for administrative divisions, an absence already pointed out by Correnti and Maestri and others when the unified state was formed.⁵⁹ Was the creation of the statistical compartments, as homogeneous aggregations of provinces entirely for instrumental use, also a result of or in some way associated with the regional design being promoted by the ministers Farini and Minghetti during the same period? To my mind, this question, which has been posed anew in recent times, merits more careful evaluation and a more in-depth review of the history of administration and administrative geography. It is not enough to infer from Maestri's position on the »decentralization« theories, which he proposed and publicly expounded long before the regional projects were presented,⁶⁰ the belief that he »already had the regions in mind as instruments of administrative decentralization« and that once »this idea had been rejected by parliament, the compartments were proposed as means for the statistical configuration of the territory«.⁶¹

Everything, or nearly everything, has already been written on the regional projects presented by the Bolognese Marco Minghetti to the »Extraordinary and Provisional Legislative Commission at the Council of State«, whose activity lasted from 13 August 1860 to 25 October 1861, the date on which the proposals were officially withdrawn, although their fate had been sealed from the time when the government had decided not to support them in March of the same year, citing the »cabinet issue«.⁶² However, it would be worth considering the documents in order to ascertain the linkage among these

projects, the work of the commission, the role played by Cavour and his collaborators,⁶³ and the possible ties to the projects for the creation of the statistical compartments in the new unified state. Despite the ultimately negative outcome of the regional plans, there can be no doubt that these represented an extremely important chapter in Italy's administrative history. It is equally clear that the spirit of many of Pietro Maestri's observations can be easily identified in the »Nota« presented to the commission by Luigi Carlo Farini. Especially significant in this regard is the passage in which Farini identifies the most effective means of securing the objective of »coordinating the powerful unity of the State with the rapid development of local life«:

[...] in order to make a law that serves this purpose, it is first necessary to establish the fundamental maxims upon which to create the design for the political division of the State. To realize this division, is it necessary to ignore every other moral unit other than that created by a Province, as the law in force provides? Or should we acknowledge that the Provinces in Italy are grouped together naturally and historically into other larger centres that have had, and still have, a reason to exist in the body of Italy? [...] Above the Provinces, but below the political concept of the State, I believe that we must take account of the centres which represent those ancient Italian autonomies which so nobly sacrificed themselves to the unity of the nation. The political division that we must establish should be the fruit of neither an abstract concept nor an arbitrary operation. It must represent the actual subdivisions that exist under natural and historical conditions; those centres of moral strength that might revolt if they were to be oppressed by the pedantry of the system, but which, if legitimately satisfied, might contribute admirably to the strength and splendour of the Nation. If we wish to fulfil an efficient task of decentralization and give our country the institutions that are most appropriate for it, we must, in my view, respect Italy's natural framework.⁶⁴

It is a widely-shared historiographical theory, and one openly endorsed already at that time, that what led to the failure of the regional projects was the »discovery« or »conquest« of the South and the fear of potential separatist

movements raised by the Piedmontese ruling class, which was therefore increasingly decisively oriented towards immediate annexation through a plebiscite. But it was not only the fear that the former states might arise again under the guise of regions that brought about this failure; another important factor was the spirit of »cittadineria« – the »spirit of enmity« to which Correnti referred at the beginning of the 1850s as one »among the many curses« of the peninsula.⁶⁵ Jealousies between cities and rivalries between provinces played a major role in the abandonment of the timid regionalization projects: Modena's ruling class could not stand by passively and watch the emergence of a new regional centre at Bologna while Modena itself lost its status as the capital of a small dukedom.⁶⁶ Similarly, Siena, mindful of its ancient rivalry with Florence, was more willing to accept Piedmontese centralization and relinquish its administrative autonomy than it was to be subject to Florence;⁶⁷ not to mention Sicily, which, as the moderate Francesco Ferrara wrote to Cavour, had embraced the »revolution« solely because of its »irresistible desire to be emancipated from Naples«, the Sicilians being willing to »welcome any system that guarantees them liberty and independence from Naples, today and in the future«.⁶⁸

Despite the long dispute between minister Minghetti and the commission, the final rejection of the regional projects put an end to any notion of an expanded district to which coordination of local administration could be entrusted, and confirmed the unexpected centrality of the provinces as an intermediate body between municipalities and the state. As Adriana Petracchi claimed when she drew attention to the close association between the projects to reform the Piedmontese administrative system after 1848 and those for the new unified state, the »regionalist« ministers of the Kingdom of Italy were unable to achieve what Urbano Rattazzi had succeeded in doing in 1859 when he replaced the small Piedmontese provinces with larger divisions, which were increased in number and redesigned as to their boundaries to resolve the most evident territorial imbalances, making them the cornerstone of the Piedmontese territorial district.⁶⁹

When the idea of the region was abandoned, however, this only led to the return of the long-standing problem that had accompanied discussions on the administrative system and territorial partitioning at the dawn of

Italian unification and had led to the emergence of two opposing factions in the Kingdom of Sardinia – supporters of the provincial district (›provincialists‹) and those of the larger division (›divisionalists‹). Similarly, the reproposal of the Piedmontese municipal and provincial law of 23 October 1859 merely increased criticisms of the administrative structure, which clearly derived from the French system, and the territorial partitioning imposed on the unified state. For example, in one of his many writings expressly devoted to the territorial partitioning of the Kingdom of Italy, Consiglio Norsa of Mantua passed very severe judgment on the work of Rattazzi, whom he blamed for having – like a »barbarian« – »razed Italian institutions to the ground without knowing anything about them«. Norsa continued:

*Everything that was done was done wrongly, haphazardly, with no conceptual design, or was no more than an ill-advised, pusillanimous transplant of systems and the Piedmontese routines, besmeared with foreign forgeries, in every part of Italy. [...] The territorial partitioning that has been imposed on the new Kingdom of Italy is, like all products in general of the genius that wafts over the Dora, a poor copy of the French system.*⁷⁰

These were by no means isolated criticisms in the debate on the political and administrative system of the new unified state, nor were they original; they were, however, distinctive insofar as they analytically discredited the choices made on the administrative subdivision of the national territory, comparing them with the format of French departments, stigmatizing the confusion that had been created, and suggesting drastic simplification and rationalization.⁷¹

As mentioned before, the cause of the controversy was the 1859 Rattazzi Law. Issued pursuant to the plenary powers granted to the sovereign for the war against Austria on 25 April 1859, it was not very different from the similar Sardinian law dating from 1848, except for the names of the territorial divisions: the divisions (›divisioni‹) became ›provinces‹, and the provinces were renamed ›districts‹ (›circondari‹). The territorial division introduced at this time would remain unaltered on the basis of the subsequent »Law for the Administrative Unification of the Kingdom of Italy« of 20 March

1865 and its »Attachment A: Municipal and Provincial Law«.⁷² The first title of each of the two laws, »Division of the territory of the Kingdom and government authority«, opens with the same list of administrative districts: »The Kingdom is divided into provinces, districts, ›mandamenti‹, and municipalities«.⁷³

As is evident from the accompanying report presented to the king by Rattazzi, in whose opinion the law was meant to »centralize the political system and emancipate the administrative system«, the territorial entities actually intended by the two laws were municipalities and provinces. The former, which were »the cradle of modern freedoms throughout Europe«, represented the original core of community life and the greatest glory of Italian civilization; the latter, which would be given a central role according to the minister's plan, were »a great association of municipalities intended to protect the rights of each of them and manage their collective moral and material interests«. They had been »created on a broad basis comprising substantial and homogeneous economic and moral interests«.⁷⁴

Although Italian administrative historiography takes account of the various interpretations of the centralization of the new unified state,⁷⁵ it has for some time revealed the distance between normative dictates and political and administrative practices, the contradiction between liberal ideological motivations and the minute provisions for control and protection to which local power was subjected. The administrative model of reference was that which had been expressly identified by Rattazzi as »the administrative system that supported the [Napoleonic] Italian Kingdom for a number of years, a system that Lombardy rightly considered to be its own, in which it has never ceased to see the best regime, based on which it has been governed for many centuries«.⁷⁶ On the other hand, there has perhaps been insufficient reflection on the administrative divisions of the Kingdom of Italy and the contradictions and ›disharmony‹ that arose from the transposition of a system designed for the small Sardinian-Piedmontese kingdom to a far larger and more complex and diversified reality like the Italian peninsula. These questions were very much in the minds of those who grappled with issues of a predominantly technical-administrative, geographical and statistical nature at the time, as well as of the multitude of politicians who posed – with a greater level of

awareness – the problem of the territorial division of the new unified state and made an undeniably powerful commitment to its efficient configuration.

It is sufficient to study the 1857/58 and 1864 volumes of the *«Annuario statistico italiano»*, the work of Correnti and Maestri, to gain a picture of the critical reflections inspired by the administrative restructuring of the Kingdom of Italy. These reflections are all the more interesting if we consider that most of them had already been formulated before unification was achieved. In the earlier volume, the focus is on the differences »between the municipal institutions of central and continental Italy and those of southern Italy and its islands«, whose differing origins are highlighted: »feudal« in the case of the latter, and »municipal« in the case of the former, especially in Lombardy and Tuscany.⁷⁷ At the same time, however, the authors emphasized the need to take note of »material conditions«, the »diverse statistical importance of municipalities in the various regions of Italy«, and the various types of settlements.⁷⁸

These latter questions are discussed analytically in the subsequent 1864 volume, in which, after raising the issue of the »virtually insuperable difficulties faced by a legislator who intends to reduce all the Kingdom's municipalities into one single legal norm«, taking statistical data as a starting point, the focus is on the »very considerable disproportions in the municipality« in regard to demographics and surface area.⁷⁹ The design of the municipal administrative network, which comprised the heritage of a tradition that in many cases dated back to the late mediaeval period and the Renaissance, was not, therefore, capable of being adapted to the institutional and territorial innovations of the new state structure, and hindered the projects for administrative reform due to the variety of its forms and dimensions.⁸⁰

At a supra-municipal level, too, the administrative system – that is, the provincial structure – could not fail to register the same enormous variety of situations, a consequence of the decisions and circumstances that had driven the process of formation of the unified state and the plan for administrative division. For Correnti and Maestri, this was another case of »piedmontization«: instead of doing away with the »old, small Sardinian provinces, [...] these nerveless, lifeless bodies which are the districts were invented«. The result was that instead of pursuing a general plan, »the territorial

division« of the new Kingdom remained that of the »former little kingdom of 50 provinces«, and the remainder of the country was divided into 59 provinces, »which included some, like Porto Maurizio and Massa, that are stumps and patches, urban districts like Livorno, and some that are only a little less than regions, like Turin, Genoa, Umbria, and Basilicata«.⁸¹

The contradictions illustrated by the inventors of the statistical compartments were not extraneous to the considerations and proposals that the Minister of the Interior, Minghetti, would develop in his bill on the »Division of the Kingdom and Government Authorities«, which he presented to the Chamber of Deputies together with his other projects for reforming the administrative system on 13 March 1861.⁸² In this project, which combined radical proposals for reform with a healthy realism,⁸³ the minister, in addition to presenting the pattern of regional divisions and indicating certain contradictions relating to especially confused areas, for example Emilia, the Marche, Umbria and Tuscany, dwelt on issues relating to the municipal and provincial network. With regard to this level of government, Minghetti stressed the need not to proceed »heavy-handedly« with municipal aggregations, although these were regarded as indispensable by the minister and the many reformers around him who recalled the previous pontifical experience of »annexed« municipalities (»comuni appodati«),⁸⁴ but rather to undertake marginal rather than structural corrections and adjustments in the case of the provinces. On the subject of the provincial network, however, Minghetti also specified areas in which it was believed more fundamental modifications were needed: the provinces of Abruzzo Ulteriore I and Abruzzo Citeriore, regarding their borders with the provinces of Ascoli and Rieti, in the event of re-establishment; the province of Livorno, whose territorial jurisdiction corresponded to that of the municipality, an anomaly which it was believed should be rapidly remedied; the province of Massa and Carrara, »one part of which [should be joined] to the Tuscan provinces, while the other part and the district of Pontremoli [should be attached] to the province of Genoa«.⁸⁵

The most interesting proposal put forward by Minghetti in his project, however, relates to the creation of a parliamentary commission appointed »to carry out special studies and provide appropriate suggestions« for

resolving the most evident contradictions in the administrative network.⁸⁶ This was an extremely significant proposal, but it was not discussed any further after the rejection of the regional projects, not even on the occasion of the approval of the law on administrative unification of 1865, which Giuseppe Saredo later criticized precisely because »it had not provided for a new administrative division of the Kingdom«.⁸⁷

Final Considerations

It is not possible here to provide a detailed analysis of the most uncertain and confused territorial areas of the Italian administrative network, to which Minghetti did not fail to refer in his project. In order to propose some concluding thoughts, however, it will be appropriate to itemize the structural problems that were central to the debate on territorial division at the dawn of the Kingdom of Italy. Besides involving scholars from various disciplines, as well as politicians and administrators, the main arenas for this debate were not only the chambers of parliament and the councils of local bodies, but also the columns of the specialist journals in the sector, for example, the »Rivista dei comuni italiani« and the »Rivista amministrativa del Regno«.

The first problem on which the interest and attention of insiders and public opinion focused was the »size« of the intermediate administrative districts, that is, the optimal dimensions of provincial districts – an issue that was in turn closely associated with the desired format of the state. The option for small provinces was mainly supported by the promoters of administrative centralization, while it was more often the supporters of decentralization who were in favour of a larger intermediate district. In one of the many works devoted to this topic, it was claimed that division into districts of a smaller size was appropriate for »small states«, while large states required a great deal of »centripetal force in their governmental authorities«, which needed to be appropriately countered by the provision of larger districts.⁸⁸ Proposals for sometimes drastic reductions in the number of provinces, with the consequent amalgamations and changes in administrative borders, were put forward in many writings of the time, as well as in parliament. In general, they were motivated by a need to provide provinces

with the resources necessary to respond to the needs of the governed, and to adjust to the transformations then under way in the country's society and economy.⁸⁹

Proposals to reduce the number of provinces were also linked to a second issue, which was also frequently raised: the need to simplify the administrative-territorial framework, with the objective of reducing and rationalizing the costs of the administrative apparatus, and to address at the same time the problem of bureaucratic elephantiasis. This cost-cutting objective clearly related not only to the »political« or general-purpose administrative districts, but also – if not primarily – to sectoral districts for specific tasks that depended on the various ministries and were located across the country.⁹⁰

Demonstrating the structural role played by particularism and municipalism in the constitutional history of Italy, discussions on how to divide the territory were also almost completely absorbed by an endless series of issues of local interest relating to individual cities or territorial areas. An example is provided by the borderline case of Livorno, where the provincial territory was the same as the municipal area, so that it became necessary to reorganize the adjacent provinces in order to ensure that the province of Livorno achieved the dimensions required of a province.⁹¹ Other noteworthy cases included that of the »microscopic« province of Porto Maurizio, which was created after the transfer of Nice to France,⁹² or that of the new province of Benevento, the creation of which, according to Michele Basile, was an example of a method that should be absolutely avoided when reorganizing the administrative fabric. In his opinion, one could not »make one province larger by stealing a piece of land from the neighbouring province«, or create a new province by »cutting pieces off a number of adjacent provinces«, as was the case in the creation of the province of Benevento: »expanded and swollen at the expense of Molise, the Terra del Lavoro, and the Principato Ulteriore, it continues to vex Campobasso, Caserta, and Avellino, and the populations aggregated to Benevento curse the new hotch-potch, and want to return to their motherlands«.⁹³

Complaints and petitions on the part of former provinces that had been suppressed or reduced in size as part of the new territorial partition of the Kingdom of Italy, which often gave rise to institutional conflicts, were so frequent that they became a recurrent theme of the times: from Savona to Lodi, from Crema to Grosseto, from

Reggio Emilia to Vercelli, and from Sarzana to Fermo, there ensued a spate of memoranda, pamphlets, and historical papers underlining the importance of the city in question and the historical, topographical, demographic, economic, and territorial justifications for its reinstatement.⁹⁴ Equally frequent were protests – the reasons for which likewise ranged from history to economy and from territorial centrality to patriotic loyalty – by provincial capitals that had been demoted in the hierarchy of the new administrative system: one of the first questions that the new unified parliament had to address, for instance, was the transfer of a provincial capital from Noto to Syracuse.⁹⁵

One final question, which is no less important than the previous ones, lies at the core of these discussions: the lack of a unitary design for the fabric of administrative districts in the new unified state. This was the result of the »lack of agreement on the criteria« that was criticized by Correnti and Maestri. Many observers at the time emphasized the intolerable confusion that was created in the various territorial divisions, which was a source of very considerable inconvenience for citizens and of insupportable costs to public administration. In an extremely clear and detailed contribution, Pietro Castiglioni, one of the scholars most attentive to the framework of the territorial administration of the state, referred to the unacceptable »multiplicity« of administrative partitions, which generated »a frightening level of confusion«. He sought to remedy this by making radical proposals for reforms, starting with the suppression of the districts (*circondari*), to be countered by a simultaneous increase in the number of provinces to 100. He arrived at a highly advanced, and almost unrealistic, proposal for one single system of territorial partition which would be effective for both the general and political administration of the state and the sectoral activities of the various ministries. He provided a list of the very numerous general and special partitions by which the Italian state was fragmented: there were 32 in all, from the electoral districts to those for the judiciary, the military, commercial administration, the postal service, civil engineering, public education, public works, and the forest service, not to mention the multiple systems used by the financial administration. From this panorama, the considerable work that would be necessary to reduce the reigning confusion even slightly, and to make the public administrative apparatus more efficient, emerged with blinding clarity.⁹⁶

To conclude, we can say that the confusion and irrationality of the administrative fabric of the new unified state was the result, on the one hand, of the peculiar patterns and timeframes of its political unification, and on the other, of the inability of the liberal Italian ruling class to create and complete a unitary, homogeneous plan for territorial division. It is no surprise, therefore, that in the face of this confusion and irrationality, even the most carefully thought-out and innovative proposals for the reform of the peninsula's territorial divisions during the passage from the former states to the new unified state, such as the regional projects of Farini and Minghetti, came to naught. It is also not surprising that a large variety of peripheral territorial divisions instituted by individual ministries for their activities persisted alongside the general administrative constituencies of the state.

From a territorial standpoint, the new unified Italian state focused primarily on its external borders, the lines delimiting the space of national state sovereignty, as has traditionally been the case for all modern states, and especially at the time when nation-states were emerging. Far less attention was devoted to internal administrative divisions, which in Italy, as I have tried to underscore, were highly problematic and complex and certainly would have required more careful consideration. The decisions made, in contrast, were dictated by considerations of urgency. Generally, this same pattern was perpetuated in the subsequent history of the state, despite variations and interventions that often remained at the planning stage.

Successive projects devised in liberal Italy to reform the territorial constituencies failed to overcome the opposition between, on the one hand, the importance of continuously adapting territorial divisions to the changing needs of society and the economy, and on the other hand, the presumed »inalterability« or »inertia« of the administrative grid.⁹⁷ The only major adaptation was the rather late introduction of regions under the Italian Republic. This contradiction also confirms the unavoidable ambivalence of the notion of »territory« in modern and contemporary times: it is understood either as a space designed and established to manage and ensure the functioning of a political community, or as a unit reflecting the historical identity of a social community. In the case of Italian unification, the contradiction between the two is clearly visible, although the historical identity factor of the territorial dimension is more pronounced.

Source materials

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- 1 Cavour to Giacinto Carini, 14. 10. 1860, in: *La liberazione del Mezzogiorno e la formazione del Regno d'Italia. Carteggi di Camillo Cavour con Villamarina, Scialoja, Cordova, Farini, ecc.*, vol. 1, Bologna 1961, p. 144–145. All translations from the Italian are mine. Only in some cases have I chosen, due the complexity of the translation or the importance of the quotation, to report the original text in the notes.
- 2 Among others, by Adriana Petracchi: *Le origini dell'ordinamento comunale e provinciale italiano. Storia della legislazione piemontese sugli enti locali dalla fine dell'antico regime al chiudersi dell'età cavouriana (1770–1861)*, 3 vol., Venezia 1962, vol. 1, p. 290; Claudio Pavone: *Amministrazione centrale e amministrazione periferica da Rattazzi a Ricasoli (1859–1866)*, Milano 1964, p. 91; Rosario Romeo: *Cavour e il suo tempo*, vol. 3: 1854–1861, Roma 1984, p. 862; and most recently by Sabino Cassese: *Governare gli italiani. Storia dello Stato*, Bologna 2014, p. 42. Cassese uses Cavour's words as the title of the second chapter of his book.
- 3 As Cavour himself remarked to Carini: *Liberazione del Mezzogiorno*, vol. 1, p. 144–145.
- 4 The obligatory reference is Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1991. For the case of Italy, the works of Alberto Banti are fundamental; see especially Alberto Mario Banti: *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Torino 2000.
- 5 On this point, see Luca Mannori: «Tra nazioni e nazione: una riflessione introduttiva», in: Angela De Benedictis / Irene Fosi / Luca Mannori (ed.): *Nazioni d'Italia. Identità politiche e appartenenze regionali fra Settecento e Ottocento*, Roma 2012, p. 7–32. Previously, in the introductory volume to the «Storia d'Italia» of which he was the editor, Giuseppe Galasso had stressed the «multinational character» of Italian history; see Giuseppe Galasso: *L'Italia come problema storiografico*, Torino 1979, p. 178. Many years earlier, in the 1840s, Giacomo Durando had taken a similar position when he bluntly stated that «we are almost seven different nations, or, if one prefers, seven provincial sub-nationalities»; Giacomo Durando: *Della nazionalità italiana. Saggio politico-militare*, Lausanne 1846, p. 86.
- 6 I will cite only Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*; Pavone: *Amministrazione centrale*; Ernesto Ragionieri: *Politica e amministrazione nella storia dell'Italia unita*, Bari 1967; and the eleven volumes of studies coordinated by the Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica (ISAP) on the occasion of the centenary of administrative unification, among which, for the purposes of the subjects that I will be discussing here, I would like to draw the reader's attention to Feliciano Benvenuti / Gianfranco Miglio (ed.): *L'unificazione amministrativa ed i suoi protagonisti*, Vicenza 1969; Massimo Severo Giannini (ed.): *L'ordinamento comunale e provinciale*, vol. 1: *I comuni*, Vicenza 1967; Antonio Amorth (ed.): *L'ordinamento comunale e provinciale*, vol. 2: *Le province*, Vicenza 1968. These topics have recently been considered anew with the publication of the relevant documents and minutes of the parliamentary offices and committees by Pier Luigi Ballini: *Il Governo dal centro. L'unificazione amministrativa del Regno d'Italia e il dibattito parlamentare sulla legge comunale e provinciale (1861–1865)*, Roma 2015.
- 7 Emmanuel de Las Cases: *Memoriale di Sant'Elena*, ed. Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, vol. 2, Milano 2004, p. 1282–1293, at p. 1288.
- 8 Giuseppe Mazzini: «Dei doveri dell'uomo» [1860], in: Giuseppe Mazzini: *Scritti politici*, ed. Terenzio Grandi / Augusto Comba, Torino 2011, p. 894–895: «In altre terre segnate con limiti più incerti o interrotti, possono insorgere questioni che il voto pacifico di tutti scioglierà un giorno, ma che hanno costato e costeranno forse ancora lacrime e sangue: sulla vostra, no. Dio v'ha steso intorno linee di confini sublimi, innegabili: da un lato i più alti monti d'Europa, l'Alpi; dall'altro il Mare, l'immenso Mare. Aprite un compasso: collocate una punta al Nord dell'Italia, su Parma: appuntate l'altra agli sbocchi del Varo e segnate con essa, nella direzione delle Alpi, un semicerchio: quella punta che andrà, compito il semicerchio, a cadere sugli sbocchi dell'Isonzo avrà segnato la frontiera che Dio vi dava. Fino a quella frontiera si parla, s'intende la vostra lingua: oltre quella non avete diritto». These ideas were taken up, with some variations, by Durando: *Della nazionalità italiana*, p. 70.
- 9 On the theory of the natural border, which developed in the second half of the 16th century, see Daniel Nordman: *Frontières de France. De l'espace au territoire, XVI^e – XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1998, p. 88–122; Peter Sahlins: «Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century», in: *The American Historical Review* 95 (1990), p. 1423–1451.
- 10 Adriano Balbi: «Dell'Italia e dei suoi naturali confini» [1841], in: Adriano Balbi: *Scritti geografici, statistici e vari pubblicati in diversi giornali d'Italia, di Francia e di Germania*, ed. Eugenio Balbi, Torino 1842, p. 89. On Balbi, a famous geographer and statistician, see Mario Gliozzi: «Balbi, Adriano», in: *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 5, Roma 1963, p. 356–357.
- 11 Cesare Correnti: «Le frontiere italiane. Il Trentino», in: *Il Nipote del Vesta-Verde. Strenna popolare* 6 (1853), p. 93–102, at p. 93: «V'ha paesi artificiali, la cui geografia non è che un rappazzamento o una frastagliatura storica; ve n'ha di naturali, dove la storia, se anche trabocchi alcuna volta vorticosa e traversa, finisce poi coll'adagiarsi tra le sponde e ubbidire al diritto divino della terra. L'Italia nostra, dopo la penisola iberica, è la meglio inalveata e la più organica regione del continente europeo [...]. Il terreno occupato dalle stirpi italiche è il solo che possieda tutte le sue acque dalle scaturigini alla foce; il solo, che nella molteplice varietà de' suoi aspetti e de' suoi climi serbi il marchio d'una possente unità».
- 12 Maria Luisa Sturani: «Le rappresentazioni cartografiche nella costruzione di identità territoriali: materiali e spunti di riflessione dalla prospettiva della storia della cartografia», in: Luigi Blanco (ed.): *Organizzazione del potere e territorio. Contributi per una lettura storica della spazialità*, Milano 2008, p. 189–213; Gilles Pécout: «La carta d'Italia nella pedagogia politica del Risorgimento», in: Alberto Mario Banti / Roberto Bizzocchi (ed.): *Immagini della nazione nell'Italia del Risorgimento*, Roma 2002, p. 69–87; Maria Luisa Sturani: «I giusti confini dell'Italia». *La rappresentazione cartografica della nazione*, in: *Contemporanea. Rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900* 1 (1998), p. 427–446. On knowledge and representations of the territory of the peninsula, see Claudio Cerretti: «La rappresentazione del territorio», in: Giovanni Sabbatucci / Vittorio Vidotto (ed.): *L'unificazione italiana*, Roma 2011, p. 69–87; Sandro Rinauro: «La conoscenza del territorio nazionale», in: Francesco Cassata / Claudio Pogliano (ed.): *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 26: *Scienze e cultura dell'Italia unita*, Torino 2011, p. 497–523.
- 13 Las Cases: *Memoriale*, vol. 2, p. 1288, 1290.
- 14 Durando: *Della nazionalità italiana*; Luigi Torelli (anon.): *Pensieri sull'Italia di un Anonimo lombardo*, Lausanne 1846; Giovanni Fabrizi: *Delle eventualità italiane. Considerazioni politiche*, Bastia 1856.
- 15 Durando in particular suggested four combinations. As compensation for the loss of the papal territories, for example, he proposed allocating Sardinia and Elba, in addition to Rome and Civitavecchia, or alternatively Sicily, to the Holy See; the rulers of Tuscany would receive Sicily, or Savoy and Nice, or Sardinia and Elba, plus additional financial compensation; the Bourbons of Lucca would be given Savoy and Nice, or alternatively Sardinia and the island of Elba, or even Sicily; Durando: *Della nazionalità italiana*, p. 90–91.
- 16 Torelli: *Pensieri sull'Italia*, p. 60–61.

- 17 Cesare Balbo: Delle speranze d'Italia, Capolago 1844, p. 21: «Sogno è sperar da una sola città capitale, che voglia ridursi a provinciale; maggior sogno che sei si riducano sott'una; sogno massimo che s'accordin le sei a scegliere quell'una. – E tanto più che ciò non è desiderabile, né per le sei sceglienti, né per l'una prescelta, né per la nazione intiera. Si grida in tutt'Europa (bene o male, non importa), si grida ora quasi unanimemente dappertutto contro alle grandi capitali, contro a ciò che si chiama centralizzazione de' governi, degli interessi, delle ricchezze, contro alla spogliazione delle provincie. E chi ha sette capitali si ridurrebbe a spogliarne sei a vantaggio d'una? Lo sperarlo sarebbe non più sogno ma pazzia».
- 18 Atti del Parlamento italiano. Discussioni della Camera dei deputati [API DCD], VIII Legislatura, Sessione del 1861, 25. 3. 1861, p. 282, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed022.pdf (20. 9. 2017).
- 19 API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione del 1861, 25. 3. 1861, p. 284–285, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed022.pdf (20. 9. 2017).
- 20 API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione del 1861, 26. 3. 1861, p. 303, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed023.pdf (20. 9. 2017); API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione del 1861, 27. 3. 1861, p. 334, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed024.pdf (20. 9. 2017).
- 21 See Marie-Victoire Ozouf-Marignier: La formation des départements. La représentation du territoire français à la fin du 18^e siècle, Paris 1989; Pierre Bourdieu: «L'identité et la représentation. Éléments pour une réflexion critique sur l'idée de région», in: Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales 35 (1980), p. 63–72.
- 22 The first parliamentary assembly of the new Kingdom of Italy continued the numbering of the Subalpine Assemblies of the Sardinian state, referring to itself as the eighth legislature and thus underlining the continuity of the two states. Likewise, the first King of Italy retained the same ordinal number he had used as King of Sardinia-Piedmont: Vittorio Emanuele II.
- 23 Leopoldo Galeotti: La prima legislatura del Regno d'Italia. Studi e ricordi, Firenze 1866, p. 22–23. On Galeotti and his work, see Luca Mannori: «L'evoluzione politica di Leopoldo Galeotti dalla Toscana all'Italia», in: Antonio Chiavistelli / Veronica Gabbriellini / Luca Mannori (ed.): Nascita di un liberale. Leopoldo Galeotti tra locale e nazionale in una antologia di scritti (1840–1865), Pistoia 2013, p. 9–61.
- 24 From the commission's report, reproduced in Pavone: Amministrazione centrale, p. 658–678, at p. 659: «La Toscana, quantunque posta nel mezzo del regno, è legislativamente la provincia d'Italia più isolata, quella che meno di ogni altra vive della vita amministrativa della rimanente Italia. Ha la Toscana una propria legge comunale e provinciale con un proprio Consiglio di Stato, una propria legge di sicurezza pubblica, un proprio regime per l'amministrazione delle opere pubbliche. Vi sarebbe sconcio troppo grave, sarebbe spettacolo veramente ripugnante che là, donde dovranno partire i provvedimenti più importanti del buon regime della cosa pubblica per tutta Italia, non siano in vigore le leggi, in esecuzione delle quali quei provvedimenti saranno dati».
- 25 On the structure of federalist theories in Italy and their fundamental weakness, see most recently Luca Mannori: «Quale federalismo per la cultura politica risorgimentale?», in: Luigi Blanco (ed.): Ai confini dell'Unità d'Italia. Territorio, amministrazione, opinione pubblica, Trento 2015, p. 41–86.
- 26 Ettore Rotelli: «Le circoscrizioni amministrative italiane come problema storiografico», in: Amministrare. Rivista quadrimestrale dell'Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica 22 (1992), p. 151–159, at p. 151.
- 27 On the subject of administrative districts in unified Italy, with particular regard to the provincial fabric, see the volume gathering the initial results of a research group coordinated by Francesco Bonini at Libera Università Maria SS. Assunta, Rome: Francesco Bonini et al. (ed.): Orizzonti di cittadinanza. Per una storia delle circoscrizioni amministrative dell'Italia unita, Soveria Mannelli 2016.
- 28 This reference to the Aragonese principle, which was also taken up by Daniele Manin, is prominent as an epigraph in a text written in 1831; see Giuseppe Mazzini: «A Carlo Alberto di Savoia, Un italiano: »Se no, no!«», in: Giuseppe Mazzini: Scritti politici, ed. Terenzio Grandi / Augusto Comba, Torino 2011, p. 157–177.
- 29 Carlo Matteucci: «Sulla organizzazione del nuovo regno», in: Rivista contemporanea 22 (1860), p. 3–19, at p. 5, 6, 10. Matteucci's phrase for his central concept is «s'centralizzazione amministrativa».
- 30 Carlo Cattaneo: «Prefazione al volume IX del Politecnico» [1860], in: Carlo Cattaneo: Scritti politici, vol. 4, ed. Mario Boneschi, Firenze 1965, p. 65–82, at p. 74–75: «se v'è in Italia un ente sociale che si chiama la provincia di Pisa o di Cremona, v'è anche un altro ente più grande e non meno reale, che si chiama la Toscana, la Lombardia, la Sicilia. E ognuno di codesti stati o regni uniti non è un corpo meramente *amministrativo*, ma comprende un intero edificio *legislativo*. [...] non si badò per nulla che le provincie sono da secoli aggruppate in sistemi legislativi, sovra principii capitalmente diversi, rappresentanti nei singoli stati della penisola e nelle tre isole ordini molto diversi di civiltà. Perloché, mentre negli Stati Romani, in Sardegna, in Sicilia, in Corsica, sopravvivono molte tradizioni del medio evo, la Toscana in molte cose, la Lombardia in alcune altre, sono veramente all'avanguardia del progresso. [...] Ma il Piemonte, anche addensando in sei mesi i progressi d'un secolo, si trovò inferiore in diritto penale alla Toscana, in diritto civile a Parma, in ordini comunali alla Lombardia; ebbe la disgrazia d'apportare ai popoli, come un benefico, nuove leggi ch'essi accolsero come un disturbo e un danno. Li assennati riputarono un vituperio che il popolo preferisse le leggi austriache alle italiane; e non si avvidero che il vituperio era che le leggi italiane potessero apparire peggiori delle austriache».
- 31 Giuseppe Sacchi: «Rivista italiana del mese di marzo I. Statistica del nuovo Regno. II. Il nuovo Parlamento italiano», in: Annali universali di statistica, economia pubblica, legislazione, storia, viaggi e commercio, Ser. 4, 1 (1860), p. 331–336, at p. 335–336: «questi inesperti legislatori non vollero neppur conoscere le istituzioni che reggevano le nuove provincie e credendole rese selvaggie dal selvaggio governo forestiero le trattarono come i francesi crederettero di poter trattare la conquistata Algeria [...]. Questo ordinamento amministrativo poteva e doveva essere, almeno per qualche tempo, rispettato dal ministero rattazziano, ma [...] esso volle por mano ad ogni cosa e senza badare al bene e al male cercò di ricomporre la cosa pubblica a proprio modo e disgustò vivamente ogni ordine di cittadini».
- 32 On the Giulini Commission, named after its chairman Carlo Giulini della Porta, see Nicola Raponi: Politica e amministrazione in Lombardia agli esordi dell'Unità. Il programma dei moderati, Milano 1967; Nicola Raponi (ed.): Atti della Commissione Giulini per l'ordinamento temporaneo della Lombardia (1859), Milano 1962. The commission met in Turin, from its seventh meeting onwards in a room at the Palazzo del Parlamento, which had been closed following the granting of special powers to the king due to the outbreak of hostilities, and it worked feverishly from 10 to 26 May. The projects approved by the Commission, which were applied by Cavour to establish Lombardy's temporary system after its liberation, were also used for the provisional systems in the provinces of Modena and Parma.
- 33 Cesare Correnti (anon.): «Finis Langobardia», in: La Perseveranza (12. 1. 1860), p. 3–4. Correnti had earlier used the same phrase in the pages of the same journal to object to the fact that the city of Milan was being treated in the same way as the other provincial capitals; Cesare Correnti: «Il nuovo ordinamento interno dello Stato», in:

La Perseveranza (23. 12. 1859). In a similar vein, in March, referring to the Tuscan plebiscite, Marco Tabarrini would write »Finis Etruriae« in his diary; see Giuseppe Talamo: »Il problema delle diversità e degli squilibri regionali nella cultura politica italiana dal periodo dell'unificazione alla caduta della Destra«, in: Gli squilibri regionali e l'articolazione dell'intervento pubblico. Atti del Convegno di studio svoltosi a Torino e a Saint Vincent dal 3 al 7 settembre 1961, Milano 1962, p. 92–130, at p. 120.

- 34 »Relazione sul nuovo ordinamento comunale e provinciale fatta a S. M. dal Ministro dell'Interno il 23 ottobre 1859«, reproduced in Petracchi: Origini dell'ordinamento, vol. 2, p. 151–155.
- 35 Bruno Malinverni: »Alcune lettere del conte Cesare Giulini Della Porta riguardanti la sua missione a Torino, maggio – giugno 1859«, in: Il Risorgimento. Rivista di storia del Risorgimento e di storia contemporanea 11 (1959), p. 117–138, at p. 129. On the mythologizing of the Theresian local system by Cattaneo and others, see Ettore Rotelli: »Carlo Cattaneo e gli ordinamenti locali lombardi«, in: Carlo G. Lacaita (ed.): L'opera e l'eredità di Carlo Cattaneo, vol. 1: L'opera, Bologna 1975, p. 283–305.
- 36 API DCD, VII Legislatura, Sessione del 1860, 26. 5. 1860 – 29. 5. 1860, online at: storia.camera.it/lavori/regno-di-sardegna/leg-sabaudo-VII#nav (20. 9. 2017).
- 37 After Lombardy, the law of 23. 10. 1859 was enacted with only a few amendments in Emilia and Romagna on 27. 12. 1859, in Sicily on 26. 8. 1860, in Umbria and the Marche at the end of September 1860, and in the Neapolitan provinces on 2. 1. 1861.
- 38 In the newspaper »La Nazione« on 22. 12. 1860, cited from Ettore Passerin d'Entrèves: L'ultima battaglia politica di Cavour. I problemi dell'unificazione italiana, Torino 1956, p. 146–147.
- 39 In a confidential letter to Cavour dated 26. 3. 1860, Ricasoli, who had recently become the Governor of Tuscany, wrote: »In my new office, I believe I will proceed with the concept of *unifying*, of assimilating the Tuscan systems with the remainder of the monarchy insofar as this can be done without causing disturbance, leaving the rest to such broader and more complex studies as the King's government may order, and to the deliberations of Parliament. [...] I believe, however, that it is essential to maintain differences within unity, and to conserve the vitality of the parts, because it is here that the power of the nation lies«; cited from Giuseppe Pansini: »Bettino Ricasoli e l'unificazione amministrativa dello Stato italiano«, in: Feliciano Benvenuti / Gianfranco Miglio (ed.): L'unificazione amministrativa ed i suoi protagonisti, Vicenza 1969, p. 379–405, at p. 390. Ricasoli would take diametrically opposite positions on the administrative organization of the state when he assumed leadership of the government following the premature death of Cavour.
- 40 From a letter from Cavour to the King dated 3. 12. 1860, published in Carteggi di Cavour. Il Carteggio Cavour – Nigra dal 1858 al 1861, vol. 4: La liberazione del Mezzogiorno, Bologna 1961, p. 283–284.
- 41 Cited from Umberto Pototschnig: L'unificazione amministrativa delle province venete, Vicenza 1967, p. 9.
- 42 Pototschnig: Unificazione, p. 9–10: »Il Ministero che reggeva il Piemonte all'epoca delle annessioni non ebbe in mente quest'ovvio principio; applicò le leggi d'un piccolo Stato ad una Monarchia grandiosa; l'evidenza gli sfuggì di mano e affaticandosi la vista per veder tutto come vedeva in Piemonte, divenne cieco e non vide più nulla. [...] Il Veneto, specialmente in alcune parti del pubblico servizio, ha un'amministrazione eccellente. Andiamo dunque adagio, assai adagio nel demolire il di lui sistema amministrativo; studiamolo bene, osserviamo sapientemente come funziona la di lui macchina, [...] e poscia ci indurremo ad applicare varie delle sue regole amministrative nelle altre provincie. Il buono si deve prendere ovunque si trovi, nè si creda

che qui l'amministrazione sia tutta austriaca; v'hanno in attività molte leggi e regolamenti italiani; e moltissime norme, che qui, da anni, agiscono mirabilmente, erano sconosciute del tutto in Austria«.

- 43 Carlo Frulli: »Fisiche regioni peninsulari ed insulari dell'Italia«, in: Annuario geografico italiano (1845), p. 92–104, at p. 92–93. The piece is reproduced anastatically in a recent article; see Lucio Gambi: »L'invenzione delle regioni italiane«, in: Geographia antiqua. Rivista di geografia storica del mondo antico e di storia della geografia 7 (1998), p. 89–106.
- 44 Frulli: »Fisiche regioni«, p. 95–96, 99.
- 45 Frulli: »Fisiche regioni«, p. 102.
- 46 Cesare Correnti: »Fisionomia delle regioni italiane«, in: Il Nipote del Vesta-Verde. Strenna popolare 5 (1852), p. 42–61; Cesare Correnti: »Casa nostra«, in: Il Nipote del Vesta-Verde. Strenna popolare 8 (1855), p. 138–164. See also Cesare Correnti: »Nozioni storico-geografiche su l'Italia«, in: Il Nipote del Vesta-Verde. Strenna popolare 1 (1848), p. 13–38. On Correnti as a scholar and politician, see Marco Soresina: »Non potendo esser fiori contentiamoci di essere radici«. Una biografia di Cesare Correnti, Milano 2014.
- 47 Correnti: »Casa nostra«, p. 149–150: »But because Italy is not a geographic entity, one must not consider ethnography and politics; when creating districts, one must follow the inviolable right of the land and the impartial witness of rivers and mountains«.
- 48 Correnti: »Casa nostra«, p. 147–148: »This subject of division is a thorny one [...]. For my part, I believe that when distinctions, details, and geographical names prevail over the customary divisions of sub-nationality and provincialism, something important will have been gained, but in this, as in every other case, the spirit is far more important than the letter, and I am convinced that there is more unity in a living body whose limbs are undone and joined together at the same time than there is in one single gigantic marble sculpture« (»Questa materia delle partizioni è spinosa [...]. Io per me credo che quando le distinzioni, le articolazioni, ed i nomi geografici prevarranno alle consuete divisioni delle subnazionalità e delle provincialità, sarà un bel guadagno. Ma in questa, come in ogni altra cosa, lo spirito importa assai più che la lettera: ed io sono persuaso che v'ha più unità in un corpo vivente, le cui membra sono nel tempo stesso snodate e congiunte, che in un colosso marmoreo tutto d'un pezzo«).
- 49 Correnti: »Fisionomia«, p. 42.
- 50 Correnti: »Fisionomia«, p. 43: »Pedemontana« for Piedmont, »Transpadana« for Lombardy, »Val d'Arno« for Tuscany, »Pianura bimare« for Puglia, and so forth.
- 51 Correnti: »Casa nostra«, p. 155–156: »Quanto al compartimento amministrativo della penisola, esso è affatto disforme, come quello che dipende dalle divisioni politiche. Presi insieme i tredici stati e semistati in cui è spartita l'Italia, contano 110 provincie, 495 distretti, 10041 comuni: ma provincie, distretti e comuni che non hanno neppure approssimativamente lo stesso valore economico e politico. Le quindici provincie dei dominj borbonici al di qua del Faro fanno una popolazione media di più che 440.000 abitanti per ciascuna e ponno perciò ragguagliarsi alle divisioni piemontesi e ai dipartimenti francesi. Alquanto meno popolate e soprattutto meno estese sono le sette provincie della Sicilia: ma sì le une come le altre sono suddivise in 77 distretti, che toccando per medio una popolazione d'oltre 100 mila anime, non hanno alcuna analogia coi 127 distretti in cui è stragliata la Lombardia, la media popolazione dei quali non passa i 22.000. I distretti napoletani sono invece da pareggiarsi alle cinquanta provincie sarde, che l'una per l'altra hanno centomila abitanti ciascuna. Ma per contro le 14 divisioni degli Stati Sardi rappresenterebbero le provincie napoletane, e i dipartimenti francesi.

In nessuna parte d'Italia il distretto ha un carattere suo proprio ed un organismo fecondo, come nella Lombardia e nella Venezia: frutto delle istituzioni censuarie, che mancano in quasi tutti gli altri stati italiani. Quanto ai comuni [esiste una] differenza grandissima tra i nostri piccoli comuni, che per media appena passano il migliaio d'abitanti, e i comuni dell'Italia meridionale, che hanno una popolazione media quasi tripla. [...] Il Regno delle due Sicilie per esempio, con una popolazione di circa 9.000.000 ha solo 3.241 comunità delle quali i comuni rurali e i villaggi non sono più di 2.158. E se consideriamo la sola Sicilia, dove ancora vige l'ordinamento agrario di Roma imperiale, vi troviamo 517 paesi, cioè su un territorio più vasto del Lombardo quattro volte meno numerose, e quasi quattro volte più popolate le aggregazioni di edifici, delle quali più che tre quinti (321) conservano il nome superbo di città. [...] Quando dunque diciamo provincia, distretto, comune, vuolsi guardare a qual parte d'Italia si parli: perché l'organismo economico ed amministrativo vi è sì vario da paese a paese, che la somiglianza de' nomi pare trovata, più che altro, ad inganno».

- 52 On the genesis of the unitary administrative divisions, see Luigi Blanco: «Territorio e amministrazione: appunti di lavoro sul tema delle circoscrizioni amministrative nell'Italia unita», in: Piero Aimo / Elisabetta Colombo / Fabio Rugge (ed.): *Autonomia, forme di governo e democrazia nell'età moderna e contemporanea*. Scritti in onore di Ettore Rotelli, Pavia 2014, p. 25–37.
- 53 Silvana Patriarca: *Numbers and Nationhood. Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, Cambridge 1996, p. 122–154. Maestri defined his work not only as «a statistical opportunity», but also as «a patriotic act» that would provide «a less incomplete inventory of our strength, and present, if not the muscles, then at least the bones of the national body»; Pietro Maestri: «Prefazione», in: *Annuario economico-statistico dell'Italia per l'anno 1853*, Torino 1853, p. V–VIII.
- 54 The boundaries between the disciplines of statistics and geography were extremely permeable throughout the first half of the 19th century; see Giovanni Favero: «La statistica fra scienza e amministrazione», in: Francesco Cassata / Claudio Pogliano (ed.): *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 26: *Scienze e cultura dell'Italia unita*, Torino 2011, p. 705–737.
- 55 Attilio Zuccagni-Orlandini: *Corografia fisica, storica e statistica dell'Italia e delle sue isole*, 17 vol., Firenze 1835–1845.
- 56 Cesare Correnti / Pietro Maestri: *Annuario statistico italiano. Anno II. – 1864*, Torino 1864, p. 45–46: «tante vorrebbero essere le topografie amministrative, quanti sono i ministeri: e ancora non basterebbe, dacché il ministero, per esempio, delle Finanze, ha diviso il regno in cinque regioni pel debito pubblico, in sei per le consulte legali del contenzioso, in quattordici pei catasti, in diciotto per le Direzioni del Tesoro, in ventisette per le direzioni delle gabelle, in cinquanta per la direzione del Demanio: e i sottocompartimenti di codeste partizioni sono anch'essi diversi e s'intralciano e s'intersecano variamente. [...] ne venne ad ogni parte dell'Amministrazione un disagio grandissimo; e un disagio più grande ai cittadini i quali non trovano chi li possa scorgere sicuramente in codesto viluppo di partizioni ammassate [sic] e accavallate senza fermo disegno».
- 57 *Statistica del Regno d'Italia. Popolazione. Movimento dello stato civile nell'anno 1863*, Firenze 1864, p. VI, from which the citations that follow are also taken: «ci riusciva poi disagiata procedere per raffronti tra provincie e provincie senza un intermedio punto d'appoggio, intorno a cui venissero a coordinarsi le naturali relazioni delle provincie tra loro sia per vicinà di luogo, sia per conformità di costituzione fisica, sia per analogia di complessione economica, sia infine per comunanza di tradizioni civili. Da ciò fummo indotti ad aggregare fra loro le provincie, prima di tutto secondo la loro coesione

topografica, che determina necessariamente una correlazione e rispondenza economica; in secondo luogo giusta le tradizioni morali e civili proprie delle diverse parti d'Italia. Codesti gruppi, che chiameremo Compartimenti, rendono per avventura immagine o degli antichi Stati in che era divisa la nostra patria, o delle Regioni nelle quali alcuni divisavano poter opportunamente scompartire il territorio nazionale. Ma chi ben guardi si persuaderà che il nostro concetto non s'informa nè sulle dolorose vestigie di un passato, che speriamo irrevocabile, nè sulle ormai condannate preconcezioni di federalismo amministrativo. Come abbiamo già accennato, i nostri compartimenti sono topografici, o per dir tutto in una parola, statistici; essi non fanno che riprodurre le divisioni territoriali fondate sulla natura del suolo e sulle leggi della convivenza economica, divisioni territoriali che fin dai tempi antichi e nel Medio Evo non rispondevano alle divisioni politiche, nè alle più mutevoli circoscrizioni amministrative, ma che avevano una ben altra e più solida base nelle leggi della distanza, della locomozione e del lavoro».

- 58 They were officially renamed «regions» in 1912.
- 59 See Lucio Gambi: «Le «regioni» italiane come problema storico», in: *Quaderni storici* 12 (1977), p. 275–298; Lucio Gambi: *L'equivoco tra compartimenti statistici e regioni costituzionali*, Faenza 1963. On Gambi's contribution, and on the controversial status of administrative geography in Italy in general, see Floriana Galluccio / Maria Luisa Sturani: «L'equivoco» della geografia amministrativa: ripensare le dinamiche del «décoûpage» a partire da Lucio Gambi», in: *Quaderni storici* 43 (2008), p. 155–176.
- 60 See Pietro Maestri (anon.): *Annuario economico-politico*, Torino 1852; Pietro Maestri: «Del decentramento amministrativo in Francia», in: *Il Politecnico. Repertorio mensile di studi applicati alla prosperità e coltura sociale* 10 (1861), p. 288–305.
- 61 Fabio Lando: «Numeri e territorio. Statistica e geografia nell'Italia dell'Ottocento», in: *Bollettino della Società geografica italiana* 146 (2009), p. 317–347, at p. 333.
- 62 The obligatory point of reference here is Roberto Ruffilli: *La questione regionale dall'unificazione alla dittatura (1862–1942)*, Milano 1971.
- 63 Recently, Roberto Martucci has raised doubts concerning the sincerity of the commitment to independence of many of the protagonists in this affair, starting with Cavour, and has claimed that it was more of a «Cavourian ambush on the moderate Sicilian, and to a lesser extent Neapolitan, supporters of independence», with the aim of reducing diffidence towards annexation on the occasion of plebiscites, and then abandoning the projects at the most appropriate moment, once the annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies had been concluded; see Roberto Martucci: «Cavour, o l'autonomia impossibile. A proposito del progetto Farini-Minghetti e del «regionalismo per le allodole» (18 maggio 1860 – giugno 1861)», in: *Assunta Trova / Giuseppe Zichi (ed.): Cattaneo e Garibaldi. Federalismo e Mezzogiorno*, Roma 2004, p. 101–143. A similar theory had already been formulated in Roberto Martucci: *L'invenzione dell'Italia unita 1855–1864*, Firenze 1999, p. 408–415. Denis Mack Smith had previously written of «tactical expediency aimed at facilitating annexation» on the subject of Cavour's regionalism; Denis Mack Smith: *Cavour e Garibaldi nel 1860*, Torino 1958, p. 488; cited by Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 1, p. 286.
- 64 Farini's «Nota» is reproduced in Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 3, p. 186–192, at p. 187–188: «Per fare una legge che miri a questo fine, è necessario innanzi tutto lo stabilire le massime fondamentali sulle quali farsi il disegno della circoscrizione politica dello Stato. Volendo dividere questa circoscrizione, dobbiamo noi disconoscere ogni altra unità morale fuorché quella costituita dalla Provincia, così come

provvede la legge in vigore? O invece non dovremo conoscere che le Province italiane si aggruppano naturalmente e storicamente fra di loro in altri centri più vasti, che hanno avuto ed hanno tuttavia ragione di esistere nell'organismo della vita italiana? [...] Al disopra della Provincia, al disotto del concetto politico dello Stato, io penso che si debba tener conto di questi centri, i quali rappresentano quelle antiche autonomie italiane, che fecero sì nobile omaggio di sé all'unità della nazione. La circoscrizione politica che dobbiamo stabilire non vuol essere né il frutto d'un concetto astratto, né un'opera arbitraria; ma deve rappresentare quelle suddivisioni effettive che esistono nelle condizioni naturali e storiche: que' centri di forze morali, le quali se fossero oppresse per pedanteria di sistema potrebbero riscuotersi e risollevarsi in modo pericoloso, ma che, legittimamente soddisfatte, possono mirabilmente concorrere alla forza e allo splendore della Nazione. Se vogliamo compiere una efficace opera di decentramento, e dare alla nostra patria gli istituti che più le si convengono, bisogna, a parer mio, rispettare le membrature naturali dell'Italia».

65 Correnti: «Casa nostra», p. 160.

66 Lodovico Bosellini: Della circoscrizione provinciale e specialmente della provincia di Modena, Torino 1861, p. 165: «a city that was the capital of a small state, a centre of no little interest, the centre of Emilia, reduced to such a low status compared with its neighbours Parma and Bologna?».

67 As we read in a petition from the citizens of the Tuscan province to parliament printed in Siena in March 1861: «Do you know, Sirs, what the word *autonomy* means for Tuscany? It means a regime that is slowly devouring the national impetus that so suited Italian liberty and unity: a regime in which [...] the Lorenese element and the ancient arbitrary, bureaucratic system not only predominate, but rule exclusively. [...] Our decisive desire is full and complete union with the new Kingdom; in short, we wish to be Italians, and not Tuscans». The full text of this petition may be found in Ballini: Governo, p. 269–272.

68 Cavour's angry reaction to these words can be found in a letter to Michele Amari: «If the idea of Italy has no influence in Sicily, if the idea to create a great, strong nation is not appreciated there, the Sicilians would be well advised to accept the concessions offered by the King of Naples, and not to join peoples who would have neither sympathy nor respect for them». Both letters are reproduced in La liberazione del Mezzogiorno, vol. 1, p. 296–305; the quoted passages are at p. 296–297, 305. At the end of November 1860, an Extraordinary Council of State was convened in Sicily with the task of «advising on the means to reconcile Italian unity with the needs of Sicily». The report drafted by Michele Amari and Stanislao Cannizzaro, published in the «Giornale Ufficiale di Sicilia», is reproduced in Pavone: Amministrazione centrale, p. 309–327.

69 See Petracchi: Origini dell'ordinamento, vol. 1, p. 183–240. According to the same author, who emphasizes the extremely close ties between Piedmontese administrative reforms and the administrative system of the Kingdom of Italy, the original reform projects also derived from the discussions in Piedmont, and in particular from the work and direction of Gustavo Ponza di San Martino, as evidenced by a letter from Minghetti to Giuseppe Pasolini dated 23 April 1860; Petracchi: Origini dell'ordinamento, vol. 1, p. 294.

70 Consiglio Norsa: Sul compartimento territoriale e sull'amministrazione del nuovo Regno d'Italia. Considerazioni statistiche ed economiche, Milano 1863, p. 4–5: «Tutto quel che fu fatto, fu fatto a sproposito, a casaccio, senza concetto, senza disegno; o non fu che il trapianto inconsulto e pusillo degli ordini e della *rotina* piemontese, infardata di straniere contraffazioni, in tutte le parti d'Italia. [...] Il compartimento territoriale imposto al nuovo Regno d'Italia

è, come tutti in generale i prodotti del genio che aleggia sulla Dora, una mala copia dell'ordinamento francese».

71 Similarly, although of different political orientation, especially on the regional issue, see Leone Carpi: Del riordinamento amministrativo del regno e del sistema proposto dal Ministro dell'Interno nel suo discorso inaugurale dei lavori della Commissione speciale presso il Consiglio di Stato. Considerazioni, Bologna 1860; Pier Carlo Boggio: «Riordinamento amministrativo del Regno d'Italia», in: Rivista amministrativa del Regno 12 (1861), p. 81–90, 217–243; Carlo De Cesare: Il passato, il presente e l'avvenire della pubblica amministrazione nel Regno d'Italia, Firenze 1865; Pietro Ruscone: Sul compartimento territoriale e sull'ordinamento giudiziario ed amministrativo del Regno d'Italia. Cenni, Milano 1867.

72 The law had six attachments: the Municipal and Provincial Law (Attachment A), the Law on Public Safety (Attachment B), the Law on Public Health (Attachment C), the Law on the Council of State (Attachment D), the Law on Administrative Disputes (Attachment E), and the Law on Public Works (Attachment F). It was followed a few months later by the Organic Law on the Legal System (6. 12. 1865). On the parts of the Municipal and Provincial Law discussed here, see Francesco Bonini: «Comuni e Province, circoscrizioni (all. A)», in: Storia Amministrazione Costituzione. Annale dell'Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica 23 (2015), p. 55–90.

73 This territorial distribution – clearly of French origin and reflecting the subdivision of French territory approved by the French Constituent Assembly in 1789–90 – would remain in effect for the entire liberal period. In 1927, the Fascist government created several new provinces and eliminated the districts. With the creation of departments and the elimination of the former provinces, the French Constituent Assembly had subdivided the territory of the state into departments, districts, cantons and communes. The Act of 17. 2. 1800 concerning Division of the Republic and Administration introduced the office of prefect at the head of the departments, and replaced districts with «arrondissements». The latter were less numerous and thus larger than the districts, and were headed by a sub-prefect, just like in the Italian districts.

74 Petracchi: Origini dell'ordinamento, vol. 3, p. 151–155.

75 There is an updated review and analysis of the question in Piero Aimò: «Comuni e Province, funzioni e controlli (all. A)», in: Storia Amministrazione Costituzione. Annale dell'Istituto per la Scienza dell'Amministrazione Pubblica 23 (2015), p. 7–54.

76 Petracchi: Origini dell'ordinamento, vol. 3, p. 152. As stated, this passage should be read in connection with the outcome of the work of the Giulini Commission for Lombardy's provisional system.

77 Cesare Correnti / Pietro Maestri: Annuario statistico italiano. Anno I. – 1857–58, Torino 1858, p. 502–507, at p. 506: «In Sicily, as in France, the municipality is a creature of the State; in the rest of Italy, on the other hand, the State, with the exception of Savoy and Rome, comes from the municipality». On the life of the «Annuario», see Barbara Fiocco: «Le «misure» dell'Italia nell'Annuario Statistico Italiano», in: Documenti ISTAT, online at: www3.istat.it/dati/pubbsci/documenti/documenti2009.html#2009_3 (20. 9. 2017).

78 Correnti / Maestri: Annuario statistico 1857–58, p. 506.

79 Correnti / Maestri: Annuario statistico 1864, p. 48–49: «with regard to the number of inhabitants, [municipalities] in Lombardy, not counting the cities and villages, barely exceed an average of 1,000, whereas in Tuscany and Romagna the number is seven times larger. There are also rural municipalities in Tuscany that have the same population as a large city. The disproportion in the size of municipal territories is even greater. In Lombardy, the average size of a municipality is less than 10 square kilometres, whereas in Tuscany it is

only a little under 100. This means that if one takes its population and territory into account, a Tuscan municipality might resemble the former census district of Lombardy and the administrative district of the old Piedmont».

- 80 Galeotti: *Prima legislatura*, p. 339: »there is a very considerable lack of proportion among the 7,720 municipalities into which the Kingdom of Italy is divided in relation to their surface area, population, and economic resources. This lack of proportion can be seen principally in the northern provinces, and this is no small hindrance as far as laws and administrative reforms are concerned, especially within the system that prevails among us of a single municipal law that we want to apply to all identical provisions, with no distinction whatsoever between one Municipality and another«.
- 81 Correnti / Maestri: *Annuario statistico 1864*, p. 44–45: »delle quali ve n'ha che sono, come Porto Maurizio e Massa, toppe e rapezzi; o distretti urbani, come Livorno; o poco men che regioni come Torino, Genova, Umbria, Basilicata«. See also, along the same lines, Carpi: *Riordinamento amministrativo*; Andrea Calenda: *Le circoscrizioni amministrative*, Massa 1865.
- 82 Marco Minghetti: »Ripartizione del Regno e autorità governative«, reproduced in Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 3, p. 335–343.
- 83 Consider the districts, »a pointless and superfluous division [...] bound to disappear at a more or less distant time«, but which »under the current conditions in the peninsula, and especially in certain parts of central and southern Italy«, it seemed opportune to the minister to maintain »at least temporarily, by sending a vice-prefect there«; Minghetti: »Ripartizione«, cited from Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 3, p. 336. On the districts, whose abolition would remain a subject of debate, but which would nonetheless remain in existence until 1927, see Simona Mori: »Una trama per duecento città. I circondari del Regno«, in: Francesco Bonini et al. (ed.): *Orizzonti di cittadinanza. Per una storia delle circoscrizioni amministrative dell'Italia unita*, Soveria Mannelli 2016, p. 33–69.
- 84 On »appodiamento«, the aggregation of small municipalities to larger cities with a separate division of taxes, see Roberto Ruffilli: *L'appodiamento ed il riassetto del quadro territoriale nello Stato pontificio (1790–1870)*, Milano 1968.
- 85 Minghetti: »Ripartizione«, cited from Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 3, p. 338.
- 86 Minghetti: »Ripartizione«, cited from Petracchi: *Origini dell'ordinamento*, vol. 3, p. 338.
- 87 Giuseppe Saredo: *La legge sulla amministrazione comunale e provinciale* (4 maggio 1898, n. 164), vol. 1, Torino 1901, p. 96.
- 88 Calenda: *Circoscrizioni*, p. 68.
- 89 See Massimiliano Spinola: »Della ripartizione territoriale del Regno d'Italia«, in: *Rivista dei comuni italiani* 3 (1863), p. 3–54; Massimiliano Spinola: *Saggio sopra la necessità d'una legge che stabilisca il decentramento amministrativo ed assicuri la libertà ed autonomia municipale e provinciale*, Genova 1860; Augusto De' Gori: *Sull'ordinamento dello Stato. Omaggio al Senato del Regno*, Firenze 1860; Costantino Baer: *Del riordinamento della amministrazione dello Stato in Italia*, Torino 1865; Calenda: *Circoscrizioni*.
- 90 Pietro Castiglioni: *La riforma amministrativa e la questione degli impiegati. Studi e proposta di una nuova Circoscrizione*, Torino 1864; De Cesare: *Passato*.
- 91 Giovanni Fabrizi, in the Chamber of Deputies, called Livorno an anomalous case of a »province without a territory«, and asked Peruzzi, the Minister of the Interior, how his modifications to the provincial and municipal law could apply there, given that they required the Provincial Delegation to exercise protection and control over the municipalities; see API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione 1863–1864, 6. 7.

1864, p. 5971–5972, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed663.pdf (20. 9. 2017). The province was eventually expanded to include two municipalities from the province of Pisa, the entire district of Volterra, some municipalities of the province of Florence, and the island of Elba. See also De Cesare: *Passato*, p. 144–145.

- 92 Michele Basile: *Le circoscrizioni territoriali amministrative del Regno d'Italia*, Messina 1865, suggests that it should be added to the province of Genoa, compensating it with a sub-prefecture, thereby making it the capital of a district. Basile was a supporter of the need to »aggregate entire provinces, without cutting any of them up«; Basile: *Circoscrizioni*, p. 6.
- 93 Basile: *Circoscrizioni*, p. 6–7: »ingrandita e gonfiata a spese del Molise, della Terra di Lavoro, e del Principato Ulteriore tiene ancora irritati Campobasso, Caserta ed Avellino, e quelle popolazioni aggregate a Benevento maledicono il nuovo accozzo, e aspirano il ritorno alle proprie madri patrie«. On the territorial changes to the province of Benevento, see *Memoria sulla circoscrizione territoriale della Provincia di Benevento, Caserta 1861*; De Cesare: *Passato*, p. 144–145. Most recently, see Vincenzo Aversano: »La Campania«, in: Lucio Gambi / Francesco Merloni (ed.): *Amministrazioni pubbliche e territorio in Italia*, Bologna 1995, p. 229–232.
- 94 The cases are too numerous and the literature too extensive to provide an exhaustive picture. As examples, see V. Salmi: »Della ricostituzione della provincia lodigiana e delle vicendevoli ragioni di Lodi e Crema«, in: *Rivista dei comuni italiani* 6 (1862), p. 311–324; *Delle pretese e dei diritti di Crema per avere un'autonomia provinciale*, Lodi 1861; Carlo Donati De' Conti: *Sulla riforma dello scomparto territoriale in relazione al territorio cremasco. Memoria, Crema 1860; Ragioni della necessità della restaurazione della provincia di Savona, Torino 1862*; *Petizione del Municipio di Grosseto perché sia mantenuta la autonomia ed integrità della provincia grossetana del 12 Dicembre 1863 e documenti di corredo, Grosseto 1864*; *Dell'importanza storico-geografica che ha la città di Sarzana relativamente alla Lunigiana per essere centro d'amministrazione economico-civile. Promemoria, Genova 1861–1862*; *Per la ricostituzione della Provincia di Vercelli. Petizione al Parlamento Nazionale, Vercelli s. d.*
- 95 See API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione 1861, 18. 5. 1861, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed059.pdf (20. 9. 2017); API DCD, VIII Legislatura, Sessione 1861, 20. 5. 1861, online at: storia.camera.it/regno/lavori/leg08/sed060.pdf (20. 9. 2017). One critic of the project was Raeli, the deputy from Noto; see Matteo Raeli: *Brevi osservazioni sul progetto di legge presentato dal signor Ministro dell'Interno per lo trasferimento del capoluogo della provincia da Noto a Siracusa*, Torino 1862. For Syracuse's arguments, see *Ragioni di Siracusa contro Noto*, Torino 1861.
- 96 Castiglioni: *Riforma amministrativa*. Strongly opposed to the theory of the one hundred provinces supported by Castiglioni was Basile: *Circoscrizioni*, p. 18–19.
- 97 See Maria Luisa Sturani: »L'inerzia« dei confini amministrativi provinciali come problema geostorico«, in: Filiberto Agostini (ed.): *Le amministrazioni provinciali in Italia. Prospettive generali e vicende venete in età contemporanea*, Milano 2011, p. 62–79. A work by Pietro Castiglioni allows one to appreciate that the inalterability of administrative boundaries was more a »sort of common belief« than an actual fact. Produced only a few years after unification, this reference work lists no less than 119 changes to territorial partitions, albeit modest in scope; see Pietro Castiglioni: *Circoscrizioni amministrative, giudiziaria, elettorale e diocesana, e dizionario dei comuni del Regno d'Italia, comprese le provincie venete*, Firenze 1867, p. 54–57.

Abstract

The essay analyses the relationship between administration and territory at the birth of the Italian unitary state. Following the discussions of the time involving scholars of diverse disciplinary provenance, politicians, and administrators, the essay highlights the main problems encountered by the design of the administrative districts of the new Kingdom of Italy: the territorial contradictions and the imbalances that conditioned their initial structure and subsequent history; the legacy of the boundaries and internal territorial divisions of the former states of the peninsula; the various proposals put forward for the country's regional organization by geographers, statisticians and politicians, even before the completion of unification; the territorial and administrative problems of the new state: natural or artificial districts, small or large provinces, the weight of municipalities, projects of regionalization; the contribution of new sciences, such as geography and statistics; the choice of administrative centralization, with its inevitable consequences on the boundaries of territorial partitions, linked to the ›exceptionality‹ of the historical moment.

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