

THE TRANSITION IN EUROPE BETWEEN XVII AND XVIII CENTURIES

Perspectives and case studies

The period of transition between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1680-1720) culminated in the War of the Spanish Succession, and represents an age of great changes across the continent; on the Italian mainland, the centuries-old Spanish government came to an end and a new era began. This book is a compilation of work done at an international workshop held at Università Cattolica in Milan in 2013, in collaboration with the Dipartimento di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea and the international group 'Red Sucesión'. During the workshop sessions historians compared their ideas, discussed publishers' proposals and expressed their ideas. This collection of papers is not only the result of individual research but also a consequence of the wide-ranging discussions held during the Milan meeting. The book seeks to throw some light on an important and, so far, largely neglected period of European history.

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TEMI **di** **S**TORIA
FRANCOANGELI

Representation of Interests and Institutional Changes in the State of Milan Across the 17th and 18th Centuries. Notes and Possible Avenues of Research

Alessandro Buono*

Much of the history of the territorial bodies of *Ancien Régime* Lombardy remains to be written. While it has attracted the attention of scholars of medieval studies¹, over the last century it has only partially and sporadically won the interest of early modern historians.

Between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, it was the object of an initial phase of interest in the so-called legal-economic historiography. Scholars such as Ettore Verga², Alessandro Visconti³ and Salvatore Pugliese⁴ did not fail to emphasise the role in the administration of the State of Milan of the provincial administrative bodies, the Congregations of the *contadi* (county Congregations), and the Congregation of the State, that is, the meeting of all the cities' orators (*oratori*, i.e. delegates) and mayors (*sindaci*) of the provinces of Lombardy, led by the *vicario di provvisione* of Milan. As is well-known, these studies of a strictly institutional approach shared a nationalistic disapproval of the indolence and disunion of the administrative bodies of Lombardy. It is claimed that the latter, during the first two centuries of the so-called "foreign domination", did not hinder Spanish autocracy with the proper spirit of national unity, and constituted specific impediments during the period of 18th century reforms⁵.

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Abbreviations: Archivio Storico del Comune di Milano = ASCMi.

1. Firstly by Giorgio Chittolini and several of his students, starting from the paradigm of the "Regional State". See G. Chittolini, *La formazione dello Stato regionale e le istituzioni del contado. Secoli XIV e XV*, Torino, Einaudi, 1979.

2. E. Verga, "La congregazione del ducato di Milano o l'amministrazione dell'antica provincia di Milano (1561-1759)", in «Archivio Storico Lombardo», 1895, s. III, XXII, 6, pp. 383-407.

3. A. Visconti, *La pubblica amministrazione nello Stato milanese durante il predominio straniero (1541-1796). Saggio di storia del diritto amministrativo*, Roma, Athenaeum, 1913.

4. S. Pugliese, *Condizioni economiche e finanziarie della Lombardia nella prima metà del secolo XVIII*, Torino, Bocca, 1924.

5. Last emphasised by C. Cremonini, "The Congregazione dello Stato between Renewed

It is worth noting, however, that these studies highlighted some signs that allow the identification of two crucial turning-points in the life of these administrative bodies, in the 16th and 17th centuries. Firstly, in the mid-16th century, when the county Congregations were born, following the tax disputes arising as a consequence of the *estimo* (a land-tax register) of Charles V. Established to defend the interests of the territorial bodies, the county Congregations from then onwards became a permanent and important presence in the Lombardy power arena. Secondly, in the mid 17th century, when – under the pressure of both the military tax system's expansion, and the entrustment of the military quarters' management to the county administrations in wartime and, after 1659, also under the pressure of the entrustment of the contract for the quartering of the army (known as *Rimplazzo*) to the Congregation of the State – the importance of the provincial Congregations increased, especially the Congregation of the State, which consistently earned a chance to become the representative of the entire *Milanesado*⁶. Although studies devoted to the late Middle Ages and to the Renaissance do mention the presence of forms of cooperation of local communities since the 14th century⁷, their permanent coordination in the county Congregations was a phenomenon strictly tied to further developments in the 16th century, to the introduction of the new *mensuale* tax at the time of Charles V and to the need for the State governors – the pivotal figures of that government *in absentia*, which came into existence over the century – to have permanent adherents and allies in the territory.

Only from the 1970's to the 1980's did historians once again become interested in these administrative bodies. In particular, scholars such as Giovanni Vigo who, in his 1979 volume, analysed the disputes arising around the *estimo* of Charles V⁸, and Giorgio Chittolini, who inspired a series of studies on the topic of the institutions of Lombardy's *Contadi*, in a comparative perspective with the *Territories* of the nearby Republic of Venice. The result of this studies

Local, Fervor and Unitary Tension (1590-1706)", in G. De Luca – G. Sabatini (eds.), *Growing in the Shadow of an Empire. How Spanish Colonialism Affected Economic Development in Europe and in the World (16th-18th cc.)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2012, pp. 361-376, among others.

6. I believe that useful information to this end may still be gleaned from S. Pugliese, *Condizioni economiche*, p. 129 and following. On the development of the territorial administrative bodies relative to the military tax system in the 17th century, see A. Buono, *Esercito, istituzioni, territorio. Alloggiamenti militari e "case herme" nello Stato di Milano (secoli XVI e XVII)*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2009, in addition to numerous studies by Davide Maffi, including D. Maffi, *Il baluardo della corona. Guerra, esercito, finanze e società nella Lombardia seicentesca (1630-1660)*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2007 and Id., *La cittadella in armi. Esercito, società e finanza nella Lombardia di Carlo II 1660-1700*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2010.

7. Federico Del Tredici notes, for example, that Ettore Verga's 1895 study still «counts» for those wishing to study the origin of the Congregations of the Duchy of Milan. Del Tredici highlights that «Elders of the parishes certainly [...] existed in the county of Milan since the 14th century». See F. Del Tredici, *Comunità, nobili e gentiluomini nel contado di Milano del Quattrocento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2012, p. 179.

8. G. Vigo, *Fisco e società nella Lombardia del Cinquecento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1979.

were the 1983 monographic issue of the journal *Studi Bresciani*, “Contadi e Territori”, which remains a point of reference in the field⁹. Once again, these studies stemmed mainly from institutional and economic historical interests. Giovanni Vigo cast light on the founding period of the institutions of the territorial bodies of the State. He analysed them in the light of the disputes that led to their establishment and recognition by Ferrante Gonzaga, and highlighted the existing connection between the changes and needs of the tax system and the institutional dynamics. Giorgio Chittolini’s work attempted to compare the various historical experiences of the local institutions’, trying to overcome the boundaries between the Middle Ages and the early modern age, and between regional historiographies. The research focus proposed was a comparison of the institutional systems of the “Regional State”, directed firstly at the historiographic theme of the relations between cities and counties, interpreted mainly from the viewpoint of disputes. However, this period has soon come to an end. The only exception is perhaps the study of Chiara Porqueddu, who returned on the subject several times in the early 1980’s¹⁰ and mid-1990’s¹¹. This historian, who has recently dedicated a voluminous monograph to *The Patriciate of Pavia in the Spanish era*¹², is the one who most focused attention on the figures that populated these assemblies, though with the firm belief that the concrete social networks which manage the power do not replace the «institutional places of power»¹³.

9. See the proceedings of the seminar held in Pavia in January 1983, entitled “L’organizzazione dei Territori e dei Contadi padani all’inizio dell’età moderna” and published in the journal «Studi Bresciani», 1983, IV, 12. The papers included in the volume are the following: G. Chittolini, “Contadi e Territori: qualche considerazione”, p. 33; D. Parzani, “Il Territorio di Brescia intorno alla metà del Quattrocento”, p. 49; A. Rossini, “Il Territorio bresciano dopo la riconquista veneziana del 1516”, p. 77; M. Occhielli, “Una città senza Contado. Vigevano e il suo territorio nella seconda metà del Cinquecento”, p. 97; B. Molteni, “I Contadi nello Stato di Milano fra XVI e XVII secolo: note sulla formazione delle ‘amministrazioni provinciali’ in età spagnola”, p. 115; C. Porqueddu, “Contrasti interni al patriziato nella contesa fra Pavia e il suo Contado”, p. 137. See also V. Gnemmi, “Ricerche sul ‘Contado’ novarese nel XVII secolo (1645-1675). Parte istituzionale”, in «Bollettino Storico per la Provincia di Novara», 1981, LXXII, pp. 341-366.

10. By Chiara Porqueddu. In addition to the aforementioned 1983 paper, see “Le origini delle istituzioni ‘provinciali’ nel Principato di Pavia”, in «Annali di storia pavese», 1980, 2-3, pp. 9-36; Ead., “Gli ordinamenti del Principato di Pavia tra la fine del Cinquecento e la metà del Settecento”, in «Bollettino della Società pavese di storia patria», 1981, n.s. 23, pp. 176-212.

11. C. Porqueddu, “Istituzioni e società tra l’inizio del dominio spagnolo e la fine del dominio austriaco”, in E. Gabba – G. Vigo (eds.), *Storia di Pavia*, vol. IV, *L’età spagnola e austriaca*, Pavia, a cura della Banca del Monte di Lombardia, 1995, t. I, pp. 25-110; Ead., “Amministrazione centrale e amministrazioni periferiche in Lombardia tra ‘500 e ‘600”, in L. Mannori (ed.), *Comunità e poteri centrali negli antichi Stati italiani*, Napoli, CUEN, 1997, pp. 59-102.

12. C. Porqueddu, *Il patriziato pavese in età spagnola. Ruoli familiari, stile di vita, economia*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2012.

13. C. Porqueddu, *Amministrazione centrale*, p. 78, with reference to G. Muto, “Come leggere il mezzogiorno spagnolo”, in G. Signorotto (ed.), *L’Italia degli Austriaci: Monarchia cattolica e domini italiani nei secoli XVI e XVII*, in «Cheiron», 1992, IX, 17-18, pp. 55-80.

For a renewal of the studies on Spanish Lombardy it was necessary to wait until the turn of the 21st century, when a methodological and historiographical proposal, alternative to the one that, in his 1982 article, Cesare Mozzarelli called the “Chabodian approach”, was introduced¹⁴. The series of studies that started in this period – whose point of reference certainly remains the conference *Lombardia Borromaica Lombardia Spagnola*¹⁵ – is well-known and, therefore does not need to be summarised here¹⁶. However, it is worth noting that until very recently, in the renewed political history of Lombardy, the Congregation of the State did not attract the attention it deserved, because of the lack of a consistent monographic study¹⁷. Indeed, apart from Cinzia Cremonini’s attempt¹⁸, the case of this important representative administrative body remains a true enigma in the studies on Spanish and Austrian Lombardy¹⁹.

The passage from Spanish to Austrian domination in Lombardy did not attract many scholars, especially because of the traditional polarisation of Italian early modern studies on the 16th and 18th centuries²⁰. After Marcello

14. C. Mozzarelli, “Corte e amministrazione nel Principato gonzaghese”, in «Società e Storia», 1982, 5, pp. 245-262. A lively historiographical debate was opened on the so-called “Modern State”, from Cesare Mozzarelli’s position; a debate for which the Chicago conference of 1993 – published in G. Chittolini – A. Molho – P. Schiera (eds.), *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1995 – was fundamental.

15. For the conference proceedings, see P. Pissavino – G. Signorotto (eds.), *Lombardia borromaica Lombardia spagnola, 1554-1659*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1995. See also E. Brambilla – G. Muto (eds.), *La Lombardia spagnola. Nuovi indirizzi di ricerca*, Milano, Unicopli, 1997.

16. A useful historiographical consideration in G. Signorotto, “Fonti documentarie e storiografia. La scoperta della complessità”, in M.C. Giannini – G. Signorotto (eds.), *Lo Stato di Milano nel XVII secolo Memoriali e relazioni*, Roma, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2006, pp. VII-LXIII.

17. There is, however, no lack of scholars who, starting from different viewpoints and with various interests, devoted particular attention to the Congregation of the State. They include Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño’s studies of the era of Charles II. See, for example, *La República de las Parentelas. El Estado de Milán en la monarquía de Carlos II*, Mantova, G. Arcari, 2002, and D. Maffi, *La cittadella*, who analysed the Congregation documents with reference to the contracts and the military tax system.

18. See, C. Cremonini, *The Congregazione dello Stato*. To this end, by Cinzia Cremonini, reference is made moreover to Ead., “Il Consiglio segreto tra interim e prassi quotidiana (1622-1706)”, in E. Brambilla – G. Muto (eds.), *La Lombardia spagnola. Nuovi indirizzi di ricerca*, Milano, Unicopli, 1997, pp. 225-261, a contribution to a history of the institutions which focuses on the concrete everyday dialectics and the power relationships between the actual people who populated these institutions.

19. As highlighted by another recent study, S. Mori, “*La Lombardia settecentesca come ipotesi di spazio nazionale: iniziativa asburgica e culture territoriali a confronto*”, in A. De Benedictis – I. Fosi – L. Mannori (eds.), *Nazioni d’Italia. Identità politiche e appartenenze regionali fra Settecento e Ottocento*, Roma, Viella, 2012, pp. 53-74.

20. Which is reflected, for example, in the clear division of the work between Domenico Sella and Carlo Capra, in the 1984 volume *Il Ducato di Milano, 1535-1796*, in *Storia d’Italia*, directed by Giuseppe Galasso, Torino, Utet.

Verga's 1985 seminal article on *Charles VI's Spanish dream*²¹, the interest for the second half of the 17th century, and for the Spanish War of Succession, has remained fairly modest, returning to the centre of historians' interests only in recent years²².

At the end of these notes, I wish to point out some possible research ideas focusing precisely on this interesting representative administrative body at the intersection of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Firstly, although some attempts have already been made to interpret the constitutional role of the Congregation of the State²³, a serious analysis still remains to be undertaken of the personal and political paths of the Milanese and other figures that operated within this assembly. In the first place, it should be remembered that in the 17th century its composition changed in part from its original 16th century arrangement – moreover, without its customary nature having ever been formalised²⁴. In addition to the Milanese representatives (the *vicario* who was head of the Congregation, the Royal Lieutenant and a delegate of the city of Milan)²⁵, it included the remaining orators of the eight cities of Lombardy (Pavia, Cremona, Como, Alessandria, Lodi, Novara, Tortona and Vigevano). At the beginning of the 17th century, the mayor of Lomellina joined the assembly alongside the two general mayors of the Duchy of Milan, the mayors of the Principality of Pavia and of the other provinces (Cremona, Como, Lodi, Vigevano, Novara, Tortona and Alessandria). Lomellina was a part of the Principality of Pavia, which had succeeded in obtaining independence as a

21. M. Verga, "Il 'sogno spagnolo' di Carlo VI. Alcune considerazioni sulla monarchia asburgica e i domini italiani nella prima metà del Settecento", in C. Mozzarelli – G. Olmi (eds.), *Il Trentino fra Sacro Romano Impero e antichi stati italiani*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1985, pp. 203-261.

22. See the recent A. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño – B.J. García García – V. León (eds.), *La pérdida de Europa. La guerra de Sucesión por la Monarquía de España*, Madrid, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2007.

23. In particular, an idea proposed by Cesare Mozzarelli on the failed evolution of the Milanese Senate into a *Parliament*, despite the primordial form of this assembly in the brief but significant period of French domination, is of great interest. Mozzarelli stated that precisely the birth of the territorial congregations «significava la crisi dell'assetto per "corpi" cetuali adombrato nel primitivo Senato [...] a vantaggio di uno tutto centrato sui corpi territoriali» ("Patriziati e nobiltà nello Stato di Milano durante il regno di Filippo II", in E. Belenguer Cebrià (coord.), *Felipe II y el Mediterráneo*, vol. 2, *Los grupos sociales*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999, pp. 127-140, quoted pp. 131-132). More recently, Giovanni Muto has once again emphasised the particularity of the *Milanesado* among the different Spanish dominations in Italy, precisely in connection to the absence of an institution of a parliamentary type in Lombardy. See G. Muto, "La città, lo Stato, l'Impero", in G. Politi (ed.), *Storia di Cremona. L'età degli Asburgo di Spagna (1535-1707)*, Azzano San Paolo, Bolis, 2006, pp. 12-57, especially p. 16.

24. As related by a 1746 notation directed to Pompeo Neri (quoted in S. Mori, "La Lombardia settecentesca", pp. 57-58) «non v'è recapito o notazione che indichi l'origine e le leggi della Congregazione dello stato, e soltanto si sa per antica tradizione che fu eretta in tempo del governo del signor Ferrante Gonzaga».

25. The two offices were connected, as on the expiry of his annual mandate the *vicario di provvisione* was destined to be replaced by the Royal Lieutenant.

separate fiscal body between the end of the 16th century and the start of the 17th; a county without a city, as Mortara, Lomellina's main town, was considered a *borgo*²⁶. What criteria influenced the choice of similar figures by the respective councils of the different cities of Lombardy and the Congregations of the provinces? What significance could sitting in this assembly have had for the representatives of the city of Milan?

Indeed, very little is known about the figure of the city orator, and less so about the mayors of the counties. The details of their relational and *patronage* resources, the bonds they had with the different élites of the cities of Lombardy and with the highest officers of the State, all constitute a matter of great interest that is still to be investigated. The nature of the rural élites is completely unknown too²⁷.

The Congregation of the State documents in the Municipality of Milan Historical Archives prove to be interesting to this end, not only for an analysis of the everyday matters it had to deal with²⁸ but also because they highlight what appears to be this assembly's most important achievement starting from the era of Charles II, i.e., the possibility to dispatch to the sovereign Court those kinds of ambassadors called *orators*, who were able to speak "on behalf of the State". This marked nothing less than an end to the century-old identity between the Milanese patricians and the "voice of the State". A clear example of this identity was the fact that the orator of the city of Milan at the court of Madrid was the figure called upon to represent the entire State²⁹.

26. The case of Lomellina is almost unknown, and was only recently brought to light by studies such as E.C. Colombo, *Giochi di Luoghi. Il territorio lombardo nel Seicento*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2008. Colombo's study, in addition to the happenings of the *Ducato* of Milan during the Thirty Years' War (A. Buono, *Esercito, istituzioni, territorio*, chap. IV in particular), shows the great vitality of the territorial bodies of Lombardy and the anything but static nature of the ancien régime territory. On these questions, the studies of B. Clavero, *Tantas personas como estados. Por una antropología política de la historia europea*, Madrid, Tecnos, 1986; A.M. Hespanha, *Visperas del Leviatán. Instituciones y poder político (Portugal, siglo XVII)*, Madrid, Taurus Humanidades, 1989; A.M. Hespanha, *Introduzione alla storia del diritto europeo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003 (or.ed. 1999); L. Mannori, "Per una preistoria della funzione amministrativa. Cultura giuridica e attività dei pubblici apparati nell'età del tardo diritto comune", in «Quaderni Fiorentini per la Storia del Pensiero Giuridico Moderno», 1990, XIX, pp. 345-415; L. Mannori, *Il sovrano tutore. Pluralismo istituzionale e accentramento amministrativo nel principato dei Medici (Secc. XVI-XVIII)*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1994 are fundamental points of reference.

27. We do know something more of them from Federico Del Tredici's study, but only related to the 15th century. F. Del Tredici, *Comunità, nobili e gentiluomini*.

28. Largely relative to the military tax system, as emerges from D. Maffi, *La cittadella*.

29. The turning point emerges clearly from the studies of Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño, among which mention may be made of "Gobernadores, Agentes y Corporaciones: la Corte de Madrid y el Estado de Milán (1669-1675)", in «Cheiron», 1992, IX, 17-18, pp. 183-288; Id., "«Pervenire alle orecchie della Maestà»: el agente lombardo en la corte madrileña", in «Annali di storia moderna e contemporanea», 1997, III, pp. 173-223. On the same topics but concerning more effectively the body of the 17th century, see also the studies by G. Signorotto, *Milano Spagnola. Guerra, istituzioni, uomini di governo (1635-1660)*, Milano, Sansoni, 1996; Id., "La 'verità' e gli 'interessi'. Religiosi milanesi nelle legazioni e alla corte di Spagna", in F. Rurale

It is no coincidence that, starting precisely from the last quarter of the 17th century, a change was also made in the political language used in the meetings and written records of the State, with the beginning of the practice of defining the city and provincial local bodies as the *Pubblici*, a term which was to enjoy great success in the 18th century. The renewed primary role of the *Pubblici* in the juncture between the 17th and 18th centuries was expressed firstly, as stated above, with the dispatch – initially to the court of Madrid, then to the courts of Barcelona and Vienna (and also to the court of Naples, on the occasion of the journey to Italy of Philip V) – of various officials and orators directly bearing the Congregation's requests. A precise analysis of the personalities chosen for this task – with an assessment of their past and future political careers, and special focus on the relational resources they possessed not only in the State but also at the different courts – could be of great interest. To provide only a short list of names, the following missions followed one another in the period around the turn of the 18th century: Giovanni Battista Airoldi (agent of the city and State of Milan to Madrid, 1690-1692); Antonio Lucini (orator of Como and delegate of the State of Milan to Madrid, 1700-1705); Alessandro Litta and Giovanni Benedetto Borromeo Arese (emissaries of the Congregation of the State to the court of Philip V in Naples, 1702); Camillo Agosti (orator of Cremona, emissary of the Congregation of the State to Madrid, 1705-1706); Ludovico Melzi and Massimiliano Cesati (Milanese Royal Lieutenant in the Congregation of the State and orator of Vigevano, respectively, representatives of the State at the court of Vienna 1707-1708); Carlo Castiglioni and Giuseppe Oppizzoni (*vicario di provvisione* of Milan and orator of the city of Pavia respectively, emissaries of the Congregation of the State to Barcelona, 1707); Pirro de Capitani (emissary of the city of Milan to Charles III at the court of Barcelona, 1708-1709); Francesco Torresini (emissary of the Congregation of the State to Vienna, 1709); Achille Torelli (*decurione* and patrician of Pavia, orator of Pavia, delegate of the Congregation of the State to Vienna, 1709-1720)³⁰.

A first possible observation relates to the origin of such figures: as may be noted, in contrast with the past, there were figures coming from Pavia, Cremona and Como but also, for example, an orator of Vigevano, the smallest city of Lombardy. During the Spanish domination, it was rare for the Lombardy orator to the Court of Madrid to receive his assignment from the Congregation of the State or to be nominated by a body other than that

(ed.), *I religiosi a corte. Teologia, politica e diplomazia in antico regime*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1998, pp. 195-227.

30. The Milan documentation relative to these events, for the period 1685-1725, can be found in the ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 162-177. In some cases, useful biographical notes are in A. Salomoni, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche degli Ambasciatori, Incaricati d'affari, Corrispondenti, e Delegati che la Città di Milano inviò a diversi suoi principi dal 1500 al 1796*, Milano, dalla tipografia Pulini al Bocchetto, 1806 (ristampa anastatica, Milano 1975), pp. 389-409, pp. 389-409.

of the City of Milan. The court legation of the Dominican father Giovanni Paolo Nazari, orator of the Congregation of the State to Madrid from 1619 to 1622, should be considered an isolated exception from this viewpoint. Also the Marquise Fabrizio Bossi, orator «of Milan and its Duchy» in Madrid from 1624 to 1625, was first of all the Milanese agents, having been enrolled in the city's *Collegio dei Giureconsulti* (Board of Jurists) since 1596³¹. In the first half of the 17th century, the *Ducato*³² was able to dispatch its official legations to Court; after having had an agent in Madrid, Camillo Madea, in 1608, the administrative body of the *Ducato* was able to send Gregorio Ridolfi and Nicolao Bulgaro in 1626-1628³³. In 1641-1642, an attempt to dispatch an orator to Court in order to illustrate the condition of financial difficulties of the largest towns of the county of Milan³⁴ was effectively blocked by the intervention of Bartolomeo Arese³⁵. On other occasions they preferred to identify as privileged representative a native (*naturale*) person from Lombardy who had achieved a position of considerable importance at Court. This was the case of the Marquise Carlo Gallarati who was appointed *regente* in the Council of Italy (1660-1672) and to whom the mayors of the Duchy directed a long and detailed written record, reiterating that Milan «non [è] mai sacia [i.e. sazia] di rovinare il resto dello Stato»³⁶. The ruling élites of the city of Milan always succeeded effectively in refuting the vain ambitions of their *contado*, as in the case of the dispute which took place in Madrid between the Milanese orator Giovanni Giacinto Grandignani and the agent of the *Ducato* Carlo Ridolfi, in the early 1650's. This dispute ended with a harsh reshaping of the *Ducato*'s demands, confirmed at a Court that claimed to be fully independent of the city³⁷. In August 1654, the mayors of the *Ducato* were forced to disown their agent at Court and dismiss him, following repeated pressure from the General Council of Milan which complained about the «offesa che haveva ricevuta la Città, e la Nobiltà istessa» and demanded «non s'avanzasse né in voce, né in iscritto in cose che fossero potute essere d'offesa della Città, e Nobiltà sua e con la rimotione del medemo Agente del servizio della Provincia del Ducato»³⁸. Only in 1671 was the Congregation of

31. See Bossi, Fabrizio, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, vol. 13 (1971) (electronic resource accessible on the World Wide Web at the address <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fabrizio-bossi_\(Dizionario_Biografico\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fabrizio-bossi_(Dizionario_Biografico)/>)).

32. The reader is reminded that the term *Ducato* (Duchy) was used as the name of the Province corresponding to the sixty-five parishes of the *Contado* of Milan.

33. ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 148, f. 1.

34. *Ibi*, cart. 152, f. 1.

35. See Signorotto, *Milano spagnola*, p. 234.

36. ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 152, fascicolo 9: *Memoriale dei Sindaci al marchese Gallarati*, undated but probably post 1668.

37. ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 152, f. 6 (Ridolfi, Carlo Francesco, agent of the *Ducato*, 1653-1656); Signorotto, *Milano spagnola*, pp. 219-222, 232-235.

38. ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 152, f. 6: 13 August 1654 and 26 August 1654.

the State once again able to dispatch its own orator to Madrid, the orator of Alessandria, Carlo Maria Stortiglioni³⁹, with the much different scenario of a State of Milan governed by the Duke of Osuna, during the regency of Mariana of Austria.

What happened in 1702, when the Congregation of the State planned a legation to the court of Louis XIV, a venture that was nonetheless blocked by the Milanese governor due to the impending arrival of Philip V in Italy, would undoubtedly have been unthinkable only fifty years earlier. It was the intention of the Congregation that Camillo Agosti, orator of Cremona, and the Milanese Umberto Stampa, would be followed by a Milanese agent, Bartolomeo Tenca, in addition to dottor Meda, the mayor of the Ducato. The expanding role taken on by these figures gives rise to some interesting questions, especially given that the positions of orator and mayor were often monopolised by certain families between the 17th and 18th centuries. This was the case of the Meda family, which already sat in the Congregation of the eighteen elders (*Congregazione dei diciotto anziani*) of the *Ducato* of Milan in the mid 17th century⁴⁰ and the Buzzis, mayors of the county of Novara, who held this role both in the 1640's with a certain Giovan Battista and at the start of the 18th century, with Sigismondo⁴¹. The circumstance that these personalities had their residence in Milan must certainly have allowed them to forge ties and relationships with the ruling élites of the other cities and counties of the State, firstly with those of Milan themselves. In this regard, digging in the contents of the Lombardy archives could enrich the framework of our knowledge “from bottom up”, in a manner of speaking, especially if the epistolary exchanged by these orators and mayors with their own city and provincial councils are analysed in depth.

The role of other figures, who at first glance would appear to be only figures of lower importance, is not insignificant; for example, such is the case of the agents and correspondents present at the different Courts which the territorial bodies of Lombardy addressed, and the *segretari* (clerks) of the cities and Congregations of Lombardy. Figures such as Pietro Bonenzio, clerk of the city of Milan, and the Spaniard Andres de Torres, the correspondent supporting the Milanese emissaries to Madrid from the 1670's⁴², appear to be of very great interest – and all the more so in the uncertain period of the early 18th century, when anxieties caused by the war in Lombardy were compounded by warfare in the Iberian Peninsula.

39. *Ibi*, f. 3.

40. See ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 334, *Congregazione del Ducato* (1638-1654).

41. See, for example, Archivio di Stato di Novara, *Contado di Novara*, cart. 207 and ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 303.

42. He himself, warning that Antonio Lucini was leaving Madrid in 1705, reminded to the city authorities that he served since the «tempo dell'Abbate Baldirone, come di don Balthasar Porro», i.e. from 1669 onwards, ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 175, f. 3, 21 October 1705.

For example, Pietro Bonenzio, when writing in March 1702 to the Milanese patrician Alessandro Litta, who was then at the Court of Rome and about to leave for Naples to pay State homage to the new king Philip V, informed him of the departure from the Pavia countryside of 20,000 French soldiers, a fact which foretold that «da un giorno all'altro, che succeda un sanguinosissimo fatto d'arme»⁴³. Predicting a battle which was to take place soon afterwards (in Luzzara on August 15 of that same year), he regretted the thoughtlessness of those devoting themselves to theatre and music in such distressing times and taking no interest in the brutal news in arrival from the battlefield:

si sta disponendo un Dramma da rappresentare in questo Teatro, per le calende di maggio, o per la venuta del re, quando segua, o per il compleaños [sic] quando non venga; veda V.S.I. che bella armonia fanno il sangue, e le lagrime, co'l canto, e con le risa, e come si crede col suono de cimbali seguire l'orror delle trombe; e v'è qui gente sì sciagurata, che si scorda de suoi mali, e negando quello che veggono, si lasciano trasportare da vane allegrezze sino a scordarsi dell'imminente eccidio⁴⁴.

Thus, some interesting cross-sections of the Milanese situation and the different courts with which Lombardy needed to be connected between the 17th and 18th centuries emerge from these epistolary exchanges, which should be exploited more intensively.

Ultimately, a return to the Milan and Lombardy archival resources appears to be a research prospect to relaunch, now that the need to interpret them always in connection with European documentation and events is well-recognised by scholars. This study will enrich our knowledge and will provide further interpretations, valuable not only for Italian history but also, and more generally, for the understanding of the nature of European political society across the 17th and 18th centuries.

43. ASCMi, *Dicasteri*, cart. 175, f. 2: the clerk Bonenzio to Alessandro Litta, 22 March 1702.

44. *Ibidem*.