Southern Elites:
A Comparative Study of the Landed Aristocracies
of the American South and the Italian South,
1815-1860

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ideology of the landed elites of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno in the half-century preceding the American Civil War and the Unification of Italy.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the elites of the American South and of the Italian Mezzogiorno based their wealth on the possession of land and on the income derived from staple crops such as tobacco, rice, cotton, and wheat in the United States, and wheat, citrus, olive oil, and wine in Italy. The two elites were extremely diversified on a structural basis; although many of the wealthiest families had built their fortunes well before the 1790s, at the beginning of the nineteenth century in both regions newer classes came into possession of vast amounts of land. The ideologies of new and old sections of the landed elites were acutely different, especially regarding the relations between masters and laborers. This ideological difference, which was reflected in the creation of two distinct political programs, was the most important factor that prevented the formation of a southern nation-state under a unified ruling class in both regions.

Unlike what happened in the larger souths, in South Carolina and Sicily, sections of the landed elites overcame their structural and ideological differences and joined together in a strong nationalist project: both South Carolinian and Sicilian landowners, in fact, considered themselves apart from the rest of the souths and fought against centralizing institutions to be recognized as legitimate ruling classes in their own right. "Elitist nationalism" achieved its success in 1860, when South Carolina seceded from the Union and Sicily separated from the southern kingdom. However, in both cases, the triumph was due to the merging of regional nationalisms into projects for the creation of much larger political entities: the Confederacy and the Italian kingdom.
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Introduction

This study is about the ideology and daily life of two nineteenth-century landed elites: the planters of the American South and the noblemen of southern Italy. Although they did not have the same degree of influence and power, American planters and southern Italian noblemen shared some basic features. They both controlled the production and movement of commodities in two peripheral areas of the world-system through the work of large numbers of landless laborers, and they both controlled political life at the local and national levels.

Most important, the two elites were heterogeneous social groups; they both included newer and older sections. The presence of these different sections was due to the patterns of historical formation of the two elites and to their relation with overall change in the structure of the world-economy. Broadly speaking, the older sections of the elites had accumulated their fortunes during the early modern period, while the newer sections rose to prominence at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In both cases, there had been momentous changes in the demand for particular commodities, and the elites in formation had seized the opportunity to achieve a rapid economic ascendancy.

The two landed elites were heterogeneous in another sense as well. Strong regional variations characterized both of them; within the “many souths” that formed the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, planters and noblemen represented distinctively defined regional cultures. In this study, the comparison has


2 *Mezzogiorno* is the most common term used in Italian historiography to describe the South.
been conducted by establishing parallels between Virginian and South Carolinian planters and Neapolitan and Sicilian noblemen. 3

The reasons for the restriction of the analysis to two regions of the American South has to do with the necessity of balancing the time-span of formation of the two landed elites. In both Virginia and South Carolina, in fact, the formation of the planter class dates to the seventeenth century, as was also the case for most of the nobility of Naples and Sicily. In addition, Virginia can be taken as representative of the Upper South and as resembling the Neapolitan core of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies both in terms of degrees of economic importance and political prestige. This is due to the presence of the largest and most industrialized city east of the Mississippi and south of the Mason-Dixon line: Richmond (see Fig.1 and Fig 2 in the Appendix).

On the other hand, South Carolina and Sicily are comparable because the elites of the two regions created such a distinctive and powerful regional culture that they were able to stand at the forefront of two of the most compelling cases of nineteenth-century nationalism: the Italian and the Confederate. In fact, this study is above all a comparative enquiry into the ideological origins of such “elitist nationalism” 4 in South Carolina and Sicily in the period between 1815 and 1860. It seeks to explain the reasons for the emergence of two similar phenomena through sustained comparison of the economic, social, and political world-views of the landed elites of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno.

3 Occasionally, I will refer to and draw examples from North Carolina and Georgia, where several Virginians and South Carolinians either settled or owned plantations, and Calabria and Apulia, where many Neapolitan noblemen had their original family estates.

4 By “elitist nationalism”, I mean a particularly exclusivist ideology that South Carolinian and Sicilian elites devised in order to justify their power at the regional level. Even though advertised as broad-based kinds of liberal movements, South Carolinian and Sicilian nationalisms in the nineteenth century were highly conservative in their content; they were headed by planters and noblemen who used the appeal of nationalist propaganda to retain their privileges in society. See Marcus, “‘Elite’ as a Concept”: “whether elitists conceive elite organization to be pluralist and cohesive, they affirm that the best (by criteria of heredity, talent, or culture) should rule society and determine its tastes, fashions, policies, and the distribution of social benefits.” (22)
The point of departure is the peripheral location of both souths within the world-system. Although by acknowledging this I make clear my reliance on Immanuel Wallerstein's work, by no means do I intend to convey the idea that the two landed elites were exclusively capitalist-oriented profit-seekers. My interpretation falls along the lines of Eugene Genovese's assumptions about American planters, seeing them as characterized by a hybrid identity of a pre-capitalist class inserted in a capitalist world economy, and I believe that to a certain extent this definition also fits southern Italian noblemen.

Later I will explain the full implications of this position; for now I want to clarify some basic similarities and differences between the two social groups that I have decided to compare. As mentioned at the outset, American planters and southern Italian noblemen were in control of the production of valuable commodities (cash-crops) in two of the many raw material-exporting peripheral areas of the world-system. They supervised, directly or indirectly, the work of several thousands landless laborers on large landed estates. They had a clear view of what ordered society had to be, and they perpetuated this view by means of an extremely classist, gendered, and, in the American South, racist ideology which informed their political actions at the local and the national levels. These features were common to

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several other nineteenth-century peripheral landed elites. Therefore, this is, in my view, just one of many possible comparisons.

The differences between American planters and southern Italian noblemen were as striking as the similarities, if not more so. American planters produced only particularly valuable cash-crops -- such as tobacco, rice, and cotton -- and sold them to Britain or the northern United States. They owned plantations worked by slaves, who were racially discriminated against and legally considered as pieces of property. They inhabited regions which were part of a republic with no inheritance of a class-system or monarchical institutions -- such as state bureaucracy and army -- in the European sense. Finally, they were part of a nation in formation whose expanding population was in the process of settling the western areas of the American continent.

Southern Italian noblemen produced mainly wheat for the internal market on large landed estates called *latifondi*, except for a few areas where some of them engaged in commercial agriculture producing olive oil, citrus, and wine for sale to England, France, or the northern United States. They did not have a racialized slave workforce and their laborers were technically free, since serfdom had been abolished at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, their tenants were legally tied to the landlords and exploited by them through particularly usurious forms of land-lease. The older noblemen were part of a hereditary feudal aristocracy, while the newer were ennobled landed bourgeois who had worked their way up in the administration of the *latifondi*. The southern Italian monarchy had hundreds of years of history and had a capital, Naples, whose 600,000 inhabitants makes it hardly comparable to any city of the nineteenth-century American South. Finally, the *Mezzogiorno* lacked the presence of new territories in which the population could expand in order to escape overcrowding and in which agricultural enterprises could find fresh lands.

In spite of these very striking differences, it is possible to compare the two landed elites to explain the origins of South Carolinian and Sicilian nationalisms. This particular kind of comparison has never been systematically pursued, even though a
handful of historians have hinted at the possibility of comparing the nineteenth-century American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno. This work attempts to follow some of the suggestions that these scholars have made, even though at times it departs quite radically from some of them in the approach and in the conclusions.7

The chapters are organized as follows. Chapter 1 reconsiders the old and new historiography dealing with the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno and provides an explanation of the theoretical grounds of comparison between American planters and southern Italian noblemen. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the economic and social history of the two landed elites up until 1815, and focuses on the emergence and transformation of aristocratic cultures and the transformations in social relations. Chapter 3 analyses the economic structures that served as the bases for power of the two elites and, in particular, the transformations of plantations and latifondi in their relations with the eighteenth and nineteenth-century world-economy. It argues that both elites were aware of their regions’ economic dependency upon more industrialized areas of the world and charts their failed attempts at implementing programs of economic and political nationalism.

Chapter 4 deals with the ideological differences between older and newer sections of the two southern elites. It compares their world-views focusing on the relations between planters and noblemen with their families and with laborers on their landed estates. The aim is to show the differences between the ideologies of patriarchalism and paternalism in the private and public lives of particularly representative families. The inability of older and newer sections of the two landed elites to

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7 I am especially indebted to Marta Petrusewicz, Don Doyle, Peter Kolchin, Piero Bevilacqua, Salvatore Lupo, Steven Hahn, Lucy Riall, Bill Harris, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Susanna Delfino, and the other participants to the 1999 Commonwealth Conference in American History, held at University College London and entirely dedicated to the “Two Souths” in comparative perspective. It is important to acknowledge the fact that the first scholar to think about the possibility of such a comparison was Raimondo Luraghi. See especially The Rise and Fall of the Plantation South (New York: New Viewpoints, 1978), 55-63; and “The Civil War and the Modernization of American Society: Social Structure and Industrial Revolution in the Old South before and during the War”, Civil War History 18 (1972).
overcome their ideological difference was at the heart of their failure to produce viable nationalist movements in the two souths before 1860.

Chapter 5 shows how southern nationalisms could become successful political movements only in small, self-contained, and distinctive “insular societies” like South Carolina and Sicily. In both regions the elites managed to overcome their ideological differences and join together in a nationalist struggle against the pressures of central governments. The ideology of “elitist nationalism” had its defining moment in 1808 in South Carolina and in 1812 in Sicily, when the drafting of two new Constitutions acknowledged in law the mingling between older and newer sections of the landed elites. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of Charleston and Palermo in the definition of a distinctive way of life among the two regional elites.

Finally, chapter 6 surveys the effects of South Carolinian and Sicilian “elitist nationalisms” in the political development of the United States and Italy between 1815 and 1860. The aim is to show how the tensions between center and periphery were at the origins of major political crises -- the most important of which occurred in 1850 in South Carolina and in 1848 in Sicily -- in both souths. The year 1860 signaled the victory of the nationalist movements produced by South Carolina’s and Sicily’s elites through Secession and Separation of the peripheries from the centers and, at the same time, the birth of the Confederacy and the end of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Just as the ultimate consequence of South Carolinian elitist nationalism was the Civil War, the ultimate consequence of Sicilian elitist nationalism was Italian Unification; these two events defined the American and Italian nations and shaped their identities in such a powerful way that their influences continue to haunt the two countries’ historical consciousness to this day. For this reason, a comparative inquiry into the deep roots of the nationalist movements which prompted South Carolina’s Secession and Sicily’s Separation in 1860 can help shed light on the larger context of the ideological bases of nineteenth-century American and Italian nationalisms.
Chapter One
Shifting Paradigms: The American South, the Italian South, and Comparative History

American and Italian historiographical traditions share a common feature: both have been characterized by particular fields of study which regard “the South” as a separate historical entity. Dwelling upon the common opinion that sees “the South” of both the United States and Italy as politically conservative and socially and economically backward, American and Italian historians have either justified these characteristics or tried to deny them completely. In doing so, they have elaborated a notion of “Southern distinctiveness” which has informed the historiography of both countries to such an extent that it is possible to call it a “paradigm”\(^1\).

The American version of “Southern distinctiveness” has revolved around the “peculiar institution” of Southern slavery and Southern race relations. American historians have written comparative works in order to stress the fact that these unique characteristics have set the U.S. South apart from the rest of the Western world. The Italian version of “Southern distinctiveness” has focused on the causes behind the country’s retarded industrialization, which has been explained by blaming the Southern social and economic backwardness. \(^2\) Italian revisionist historians recently have questioned these assumptions, almost to the point of denying the existence of particular Southern characteristics.

While in the American case the employment of new historiographical methods has strengthened the notion of “southern distinctiveness”, in the Italian case the reaction to a similar “paradigm” has produced the opposite extreme. More to the point, both historiographies have been vitiated by a confusion between the notion of “identity” and the idea of “distinctiveness”: while the former has its roots in particular social, economic, and political characteristics of a region of the world, the latter tends to assume that these characteristics are unique, and therefore impossible to find anywhere else.

\(^1\) In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Thomas Kuhn calls “paradigms” “universally recognized scientific achievements, that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (viii) [emphasis is mine].

\(^2\) This is the substance, in short, of what has been labeled “the Southern Question”.
One of the major advantages of comparative history is the possibility of correcting the deficiencies of national historiographies by playing the two case-studies against each other in a broader context. Competent comparison is able to draw a clear line between "identity" and "distinctiveness" by determining what is genuinely unique about the two cases and what is not. Successful comparison tends to highlight both the similarities and the differences in the two cases in order to acquire a better knowledge of both of them, regardless of previous assumptions.

The American south and the Italian south can be compared on the basis of broad similarities, which are part of their own "identity" and which they share with many other regions of the world. If this is true, than both American and Italian historians should shift to a new paradigm: Comparative History of Agrarian Societies. Under the new paradigm both the American south and the Italian south are parts of a much bigger entity: the capitalist world-system. As two of the many peripheries within the system, they are comparable with each other and with other regions that shared the same peripheral position at the same point in time (from roughly the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries) and which were characterized by a similar social structure within the context of the formation of nation-states. Region, Nation-State, and World interacted with each other exerting extraordinary pressure on the economy, politics and society of the peripheral regions and transforming in similar ways their agrarian world into one fully inserted in the capitalist system.

American Southern Distinctiveness in Comparative Perspective

Over the past fifty years, the American South has been a major field for comparative historians. The number of studies comparing Antebellum Southern institutions with similar or contemporary societies has increased markedly in recent times. However, in their effort to find sustainable ground for comparison, historians have focused exclusively on the two features that increasingly set the South apart from the rest of the United States and, indeed, from the western world: slavery and racism. Since the 1947 publication of Frank Tannenbaum's Slave and Citizen, a

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number of studies have compared the Slave South with other slave systems in the New World and, more recently, with other unfree or semi-free labor systems in Europe. Similarly, racial segregation and white supremacy have been guiding concepts for comparing the American South and South Africa. 5

Most of these studies share the same general methodological framework: historians have used other cases to show that slavery and racism were “peculiar institutions” in the form they assumed in the American South. In doing this, historians have revived the old myth of “southern distinctiveness” by transferring it to a comparative dimension. While advocates of southern distinctiveness have tried to identify the single central theme of southern history, comparative historians have tried to locate other societies whose similarities or differences might help to shed light on the peculiarities of southern history. 6

Both these approaches to the history of the American South have failed to recognize that, rather than being a distinctive culture, the South has been a regional variation within the context of a national American culture. Therefore, it should be more properly compared with regions that have had a similar historical relationship to the one that the South had with the Northern United States.

Two additional points should be raised at this preliminary juncture: first, the South must be seen in its historical evolution in the context of the international economy. This clearly places it, together with many other regions, in a peripheral position in the capitalist world-system. Second, antebellum southern society, based on the plantation system and on a hierarchical structure of power, has more in common with other contemporary agrarian societies, not necessarily supported by slave labor, than has been recognized so far.


In order to understand how historians have used comparative analysis to perpetuate the notion of a peculiar South, it is necessary to look briefly at some of the ideas advanced in the debate on "southern distinctiveness". In their effort to define the meaning of "southern distinctiveness" historians have moved along two lines of enquiry: the quest for a central theme, and the study of particular features. The first line has revolved around the search for a constant within the context of the overall history of the South. It has been identified, for example, with the desire to preserve white supremacy, with the English gentleman ideal transplanted in the New World, with the particular idea of violence embedded in Southern culture, with the persistence of a folk way of life, and with a tradition of conservatism.

The second line of enquiry has been characterized by studies focusing on particular aspects related to the notion of "southern distinctiveness". In the past fifty years, no single aspect has received more attention than slavery, the South's "peculiar institution" by definition. Since the time in which U. B. Phillips extolled the benefits of southern paternalism toward the slaves, historical studies have grown enormously in number and in the complexity of their understanding of the slave systems of the antebellum south. From a picture of a labor system, based on

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7 A good overview, although outdated, is D. L. Smiley, "The Quest for a Central Theme in Southern History", South Atlantic Quarterly 71:3 (1972).
9 See W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Pantheon, 1941) and W. Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character (New York: Vintage, 1961). Cash saw the south as continuously projected toward the past, when a tradition of personal relationship was held against a harsh and exploitative capitalistic society. In this sense, he echoed the positions of some nineteenth century planters, such as George Fitzhugh. See G. Fitzhugh, Cannibals all! or Slaves without Masters (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap-Harvard, 1988; orig. pub. 1858).
12 E. D. Genovese is the last scholar who has advanced the idea of the conservative character of southern society and politics. In The Southern Tradition: The Achievements and Limits of a Social Conservatism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), however, he builds upon a substantial body of scholarship within which conservatism has been identified with the agrarian, anti-industrial character of the South. See Twelve Southerners, "I'll Take My Stand" (1930), in E. L. Ayers and B. C. Mittendorf, eds., The Oxford Book of the American South: Testimony, Memory, and Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
control derived from violence 15, we have arrived at a more sophisticated description of the relationship between masters and slaves: increasing attention has been given to both, borrowing methodological approaches from various fields of social science.

No historian has contributed more in redefining our notion of the peculiarity of the Old South than Eugene Genovese. As Drew Faust wrote, “emphasizing what he sees as fundamental differences between North and South, Genovese has explained ‘southern distinctiveness’ as the product of its pre-bourgeois society. Within the Marxian framework of his analysis, the relationship between master and slave has become the determining factor within southern civilization, affecting class relationship and social structures and defining the ideology of power that gave meaning to the pre-capitalist social order ... In treating the master-slave relationship as southern history’s new ‘central theme’, Genovese has been able to construct an explanation of nearly every aspect of the southern way of life.” 16 In numerous studies 17, Genovese has explained that the peculiar pre-capitalist character of the Old South derived from a particular form of paternalism through which masters exercised hegemony, understood as cultural and ideological domination, over their slaves.

As much as we admire Genovese, we cannot avoid noticing that he is the most recent proponent of the idea of southern distinctiveness that perpetuates the long standing myth of the peculiarity of the Old South. Like other historians before him, he has focused his attention on a particular feature of southern history -- the master-slave relationship -- and has spent much of his career explaining its unique features. Because his analysis is extremely sophisticated, all subsequent historians have had to come to terms with it and, in doing this, they have produced new or alternative views of the myth of southern distinctiveness. The most controversial one, originally advanced by Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, claims a distinctive capitalist

nature of the planter class as opposed to Genovese's paternalism. Historiography
of southern distinctiveness and historiography of slavery, therefore, have
increasingly become entangled together, so much so that the former has become a
substantial part of the latter.

Outside slave studies, the notion of southern distinctiveness has informed the
historiography in a less uniform way. However, historians of the postbellum south
often have relied on the historiography of slavery in order to build up a continuum of
distinctiveness with its roots in the antebellum period. Therefore, racial segregation,
sharecropping, and coercive labor relations have been regarded as the "peculiar
institutions" of the postbellum south, and the ones that closely match slavery and the
plantation economy of the antebellum period. In spite of the achievements brought
by Emancipation and Radical Reconstruction, several scholars have pointed out that
African-Americans failed to acquire a new social status, mainly because they did not
gain access to the land they longed for. However, the New South that emerged from
the war was substantially different from the Old one, and scholars have debated the
extent to which this difference affected the life of blacks and whites.

From the pioneering work of C. Van Woodward, who argued for a substantial
rupture between the antebellum and postbellum south, we now have come to a view
that stresses the continuities between the two, pointing to the influence of the legacy
of slavery in the society and the economy of the New South. Some historians have

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18 See R. W. Fogel and S. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery
(New York: Norton, 1974), and R. W. Fogel, Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of
American Slaveholders (New York: Knopf, 1982).
19 Among the most important studies, see J. M. Wiener, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama,
1860-1880 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), and P. Daniel, "The
Metamorphosis of Slavery, 1865-1900", Journal of American History 66 (1979); see also a
contrasting view in the more recent J. Saville, The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage
20 See C. Van Woodward, Origins of the New South 1877-1913 (New York: Oxford University Press,
1951), and C. Van Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York: Oxford University Press,
1955).
21 See E. Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution (New York: Harper Touchbooks,
1988). Foner had as a model W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (New
York, 1935). See also G. Wright, Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since
the Civil War (New York: Knopf, 1986).
seen sharecropping as a new form of unfree labor, while planters have been seen as a dominant class, whose power had been only slightly shaken by the Civil War 22.

Other historians have pointed to the fact that postbellum race relations were characterized by a peculiar system of racial segregation (Jim Crow), whose equivalent cannot be found among any other society after emancipation. While some scholars -- notably George Fredrickson -- have stressed the continuity of the concept of “herrenvolk democracy”, or democracy restricted to the white race, others have stressed the actual novelty of segregation as a means of dealing with race relations, and the improvement it brought to blacks 23.

Whatever the case, it is clear that the whole concept of the “New South” bears within itself an idea of “southern distinctiveness”, based on peculiarities such as sharecropping and Jim Crow, which makes it closely resemble its twin concept of “Old South”. In fact, even though not all historians have placed the antebellum and postbellum South in explicit relation to each other, both the distant and recent pasts of the American South have been seen as characterized by distinctive features. In other words, “Old South” and “New South” have become different ways of labeling two subsequent historical periods of “southern distinctiveness”.

Parallel to the debate on “southern distinctiveness”, another historiographical field has emerged in the past fifty years: comparative history of the American South. Although it originated with a number of studies dealing with American slavery in comparative perspective, it is now characterized by a much broader historical view. However, because it was born out of slave studies, comparative history of the American South is also preoccupied with the problem of southern distinctiveness: actually, we can say that comparative studies have served to reinforce the myth of a “peculiar south”.


23 See, for example, H. B. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South 1865–1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). George Fredrickson has used his concept of “herrenvolk democracy” as basis for his comparative project on the American South and South Africa; see Fredrickson, White Supremacy. For a sophisticated analysis of the complex ideology behind racial segregation in the American South and South Africa, see Cell, The Highest Stage of White Supremacy.
We can clearly locate the origins of comparative history of the American South in two books by Frank Tannenbaum and Stanley Elkins: both advanced the argument that the unique features of the southern slave system resided in the fact that it appeared particularly harsh when compared with other New World systems. While these first studies were broad in their scope and conclusion, subsequent historians developed the technique of comparing the slave south with a particular slave society, or comparing a single southern state to a particular region of the world. In pursuing these different approaches, however, most historians were mainly concerned with testing the Tannenbaum-Elkins hypothesis on the peculiar character of southern slavery. The other case in the comparison simply served to confirm or deny a particular feature of southern distinctiveness.

In contrast, a broader and more ambitious project has been carried on by Eugene Genovese in a series of different studies. Maintaining his central idea of the pre-bourgeois characteristics of the slave south, Genovese has demonstrated how the comparison with other new world slave societies, such as Brazil and the British and French Caribbean, reinstates his particular notion of southern distinctiveness.

Since the early 1980s a new phase in comparative studies has begun: the studies produced in the last twenty years increasingly look beyond the narrow limits imposed by the comparison with slave societies in the new world. Even in light of these new developments the thrust of comparative studies has not changed with regard to the crucial issue of southern distinctiveness: their concerns and their emphasis have clearly privileged one side of the comparison. This is especially true for comparative projects which have involved the whole history of the American South: one of the most successful studies, by George Fredrickson, takes a broad look at the entire history of the American South and South Africa in order to explain the origins of Jim Crow and Native Segregation. Consistent with his statement in the introduction, Fredrickson aims to illuminate the uniqueness of the two cases by

24 Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen.
27 See especially the first essay in Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made.
28 See Fredrickson, White Supremacy, and also Black Liberation.
analyzing the different outcomes to their historical development. Southern distinctiveness, therefore, is made recognizable and explicable by comparing it with South African distinctiveness.

Other studies have expanded the horizons of comparative history by looking at non-slave societies in nineteenth century Europe. Peter Kolchin and Shearer Davis Bowman have compared, respectively, American slavery and Russian serfdom, and American planters and Prussian Junkers. However, as Fredrickson himself has written of these works, “their respective comparisons are used to support contrasting views of the slave society in the Old South and especially of the character of its dominant class.” In other words, while Kolchin compares the slave society of the Old South with Russia prior to emancipation in order to support the idea of paternalism as the key southern distinctive feature, Bowman compares planters and Junkers in order to support the idea of a distinctive southern path to capitalism.

If we analyze these comparative studies from the point of view of methodology, we discover that almost invariably they employ the two methods that Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers call “Parallel Demonstration Theory” and “Contrast of Contexts”. The logic behind the first method revolves around the demonstration of the strength of a general theory by describing the similarities of two parallel cases. The second method seeks to “bring out the unique features of each particular case ... and to show how these unique features affect the working out of putatively general social processes”.

While a modified version of the first method guides the more recent comparative studies of the American South, the second has been dominant over the past fifty years. Works like the early ones by Tannenbaum, Elkins, Klein, Degler, Genovese, and more recently, Fredrickson can all be considered examples of “Contrast of Contexts” because they tend to highlight the differences between the historical development of the American South and other societies in order to strengthen the

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30 See Kolchin, Unfree Labor, and Bowman, Masters and Lords.
idea of southern peculiarity. On the contrary, recent works such as Kolchin's *Unfree Labor* and Bowman's *Masters and Lords* can be placed within the general category of "Parallel Demonstrations" because, even if they do not have general theories to test, they tend to highlight the similarities, either in the master-laborer relationship or in the ruling class mentality, between the two cases.

It is worth noting that historians have difficulty producing comparative works that neatly fit the two main methods described by Skocpol and Somers because they seem more appropriate to sociological studies. More often, historical studies include in their comparative method some characteristics of the "Parallel Demonstration" as well as some characteristics of the "Contrast of Contexts." Unlike sociological theories, historical studies deal with past experiences which are never exactly parallel and similar, nor absolutely different and in contrast with each other.

However, most comparative studies of the American South seem to fit Skocpol and Somers' categories, or some slightly modified version of them. The reason for this is that, just as general sociological theories are tested in different experiments, the idea of southern distinctiveness, and the desire to prove it, either by contrast or parallel demonstration, has informed nearly all comparative studies of the American South. A more general point needs to be made: in spite of what George Fredrickson calls "Cross-National Comparative History," comparative studies of the American South function in a rather bizarre way with regard to the units of comparison, for they never really compare two nations, or two regions of two nations. Instead, they almost always isolate a particular feature, such as southern slavery or southern racism, and compare it with other similar features, regardless of their context. In other words, from the beginning, comparison is often inconsistent because the units of comparison are not comparable. In comparing slavery with Russian serfdom, or

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33 Notably, both Kolchin and Bowman argue that they have compared the two case-studies in order to highlight the differences which they identify in the conclusions of their works. However, independently from the particular conclusions to which they arrive, the general intent behind their comparative work is clearly one of reinforcing the idea of the master class of the antebellum South as either more paternalistic or more capitalistic oriented.

34 These two methodologies, actually, have their roots in the even more abstract "method of agreement", by which one compares two different situations to find out the only similar feature, and "method of difference", by which one compares two similar situations to find out the only difference between them.

racial segregation with South African native segregation, historians assume that the South is an internally consistent and independent unit of comparison, as Russia or South Africa are equally assumed to be.  

Moreover, because the motivation behind the comparison is to highlight the peculiarity of the southern case, scholars rarely give equal balance to the two cases. A glance at the footnotes of one of the comparative studies cited so far -- Shearer Davis Bowman’s for example -- reveals that archival research has been conducted only on the American side. Inevitably, this means that comparative studies of the American South influence only the development of American historical scholarship; little new is said about the other case. As John Breuilly states in the introduction to his comparative study of labor and liberalism, “comparative approach cannot privilege one of the cases over the others, whether as norm or its corollary, exception” and “the first requirement of a proper comparative history is to be equally interested in all the cases under consideration”.

Because the problems I have highlighted derive from the fact that the idea of southern distinctiveness has been transferred into the comparative field, it is important to show that this idea is not sustainable. It needs to be discarded if we are to build a new comparative approach to southern history. Therefore, I will suggest three lines of research in which the South is not taken as distinctive or peculiar when compared with other cases.

First, the South is a region whose historical development must be understood in the context of the history of the United States as a whole. By considering the South as a separate unit of comparison in its historical development, historians have built upon a notion of historical distinctiveness and have underplayed its role in the general framework of American History. The identity of the South -- not its peculiarity or its distinctiveness -- derives from what C. Van Woodward calls the historical “experience” of its people when seen in a national context: the people of the South have an inheritance of defeat and poverty, as opposed to an inheritance of


victory and prosperity enjoyed by the people of the North. When viewed in comparative perspective, the South should be compared with regions that have shared a similar historical experience, which is not peculiar at all, for defeat and poverty, as opposed to victory and prosperity, can be found within the context of the history of many present-day nation-states.

In terms of economics, Southern identity has been shaped by the expansion of the capitalist world-economy which has relegated it to the "agricultural-exporting peripheral zones". As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, the economic role of what we call "the South" has been for a long time essentially the same as that of many other regions, from the Caribbean Islands to Andalusia and Sicily, which were at the periphery of the world-system. "If one takes a close look at the cultures of these zones, the features which make them different at that time among themselves ... pale before the striking similarities of the attitudes we associate with 'plantation' or 'seigneurial' zones in the capitalist world-economy." If we take Wallerstein's suggestion, therefore, there are plenty of societies with which to compare the "peculiar South".

This leads to the third point. The fact that the South shared a peripheral position in the world-economy affected its social structure, making it similar to and comparable with other peripheral societies (which were not necessarily based on slave systems of labor). Indeed, the focus of much comparative literature on the two "peculiar" features of the American South -- slavery and racism -- has underplayed the role of class in the analysis of the social structure: the Antebellum South had much more in common with other contemporary agrarian societies, which were not slave based, than has been recognized so far. The existence of a small elite owning an immense amount of land, opposed to a large class of laborers, who were either landless or owners of small farms, was a situation common to most of the nineteenth-century rural regions of the western world. The fact that the working class of the American South was divided along racial lines should not allow us to forget that the planter elite in the antebellum years exercised its power over both blacks and

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40 Wallerstein, "What Can One Mean by 'Southern Culture' ?", 57.
whites. Much like other traditional agrarian societies, the ruling elite of the antebellum South derived its wealth from the amount of land owned, not only from the number of slaves; moreover, planters kept traditional values — such as honor and loyalty to the family-clan — in high regard. 42 There was nothing distinctively southern in this, and the persistent focus on the “peculiar institution” has confused our perception of the role of the planters in the broader context of the nineteenth-century world. Future comparative projects, therefore, could very well center around the similarities between the planters and one of the many landowning elites, focusing on the ideologies that linked together power, land and social conservatism, as characteristics common to all traditional rural societies.

The Italian South is a case that carries characteristics rendering it ideal for comparison with the American South at all three levels outlined above. In terms of historical identity, the South of Italy shares with the American South an inheritance of defeat and poverty when compared with the success and wealth enjoyed by the northern part of the country. 43 In terms of economics, it shares with the American South the position of periphery to which the world-economy relegated it in the past. 44 Finally, in terms of social structure, the South of Italy was characterized, like the American South, and like many other agrarian societies of the nineteenth-century, by a small elite of landowners, with an elaborate code of honor and strong family ties, who ruled over a large class of landless laborers and small farmers. 45 There are, of course, differences between the two cases, some of them very obvious, such as the absence of slavery in nineteenth-century southern Italy and the absence of a monarchical state in the nineteenth-century American South. However, such a

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41 The work of Eugene Genovese is the outstanding exception to this rule.
43 See the introduction in P. Bevilacqua, Breve storia dell'Italia meridionale dall'Ottocento a oggi (Rome: Donzelli, 1993).
44 In the introduction to her study Latifundium: Moral Economy and Material Life in a Nineteenth-Century Periphery (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Marta Petrusewicz specifically links the economies based on great landed estates of several 19th century peripheral societies, including the Italian South and the American South.
45 See both Petrusewicz's Latifundium and P. Macry, Ottocento: Famiglie, elites e patrimoni a Napoli (Turin: Einaudi, 1988).
comparison does not highlight similarities or differences in order to reinforce the idea of a southern distinctiveness. Rather, the purpose of such a comparison is to show that the antebellum South and the South of Italy must be seen in the broader context of nineteenth-century agrarian societies, and that the similarities that they shared between themselves do not imply that the socio-economic structures and the historical experiences must have been exactly the same.

The Italian Version of "Southern Distinctiveness"

When studying the historiography of the Italian South, one cannot help but noticing that a paradigm similar to the one claiming American southern distinctiveness has informed the works of several generations of Italian historians. Even though they did not have to grapple with slavery and racial segregation, Italian historians have been as effective as their American counterparts in "creating" peculiarities that have made the south of their country appear as a particular historical phenomenon.  

For well over a century after the unification of Italy in 1861, Italian historians have debated the origins of the "Southern Question". Italy's own version of southern distinctiveness blamed the South for the country's "peculiar" delay in the industrializing process. The South, so the argument went, was a backward society whose feudal remnants constituted an aberration in the context of the capitalist oriented countries of western Europe. The two great schools of thought, the liberal and the Marxist, did not challenge this central assumption, but simply differed in their historical interpretation. For liberal historians, southern history had never showed potential for social change, for Marxist historians social development was held back by the failure of the "bourgeois revolution" during the Risorgimento.

The two single most influential historians who have supported these different views are Antonio Gramsci and Rosario Romeo. Both of them built upon an enormous tradition of political and historiographical debate over the "Southern

46 The best critique of this attitude can be found in B. Salvemini, "Postfazione: sulla nobile arte di cercare le peculiarità del Mezzogiorno" in L'innovazione precaria. Spazi, mercati e società nel Mezzogiorno dell'Ottocento (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1995); see also the provocative piece by J. Schneider, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Neo-Orientalism in Italy (1848-1995)" in J. Schneider, ed., Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country (New York: Berg, 1998).
Question” and over the role of the Mezzogiorno in the distinctive Italian path to modernization. 47

Antonio Gramsci argued for the continuous importance of the alliance between southern landowners and northern industrialists and manufacturers throughout the period from unification onwards. To Gramsci, the “Southern Question” was inextricably linked to the form that the capitalist state had taken in Italy. What he called “Passive Revolution” was the result of the “peculiar” weakness of the southern Italian bourgeoisie, which predated unification. The southern bourgeois had been unable to change the social structure by organizing the masses in a peasant revolution, and so they had found themselves in a position of subservience to the hegemonic power of the northern bourgeoisie. North and South stayed in unequal relationship to one another, according to Gramsci, like the city and the countryside: one irresistibly drawing the other into a more advanced urban economy. 48

Writing in the 1950s, some twenty years after Gramsci, Rosario Romeo found himself in the position of elaborating a liberal theory of Italian capitalistic development which could function as an effective alternative to the Gramscian one represented by Emilio Sereni. 49 Romeo rejected the possibility of a peasant revolution in the South and argued that southern backwardness had been instrumental to the original accumulation of capital in northern Italy. The fiscal pressure exercised by the new Italian state on southern agriculture after unification had served to build the infrastructures necessary to northern industrialization. 50

The similarity of some of these issues with the historiographical debates on American southern distinctiveness is striking. In both cases historians have tried to explain the substantial dichotomy and imbalance between the two parts of Italy and the United States by looking at intrinsic features that made the two souths “peculiar”

49 See E. Sereni, Il capitalismo nelle campagne (Turin: Einaudi, 1947).
long before the 1860s. The weakness of southern entrepreneurial activity, the
strength of a powerful landowning class, the failed land redistribution among the
lower social strata, and the alliance between northern capital and southern
agriculture are all themes which can be discussed within the context of the modern
history of both countries. Both Italy and the United States have been haunted for a
long time by the “burden” of their respective histories in a similar way: in both cases
historians have tried to explain the causes of the different path to modernization
followed by the South compared to the North.

Since the 1980s the traditional view of the Italian South’s “modernization
without development”⁵¹ has been powerfully challenged. A new generation of
revisionist historians has stepped back from most of the assumptions of the previous
historiography. Revisionist historians have criticized, and in many cases denied, any
type which supports the idea of “distinctive” southern features both in a temporal
and spatial perspective. In the three main fields of contention -- economics, society
and politics -- they have stressed the continuity of southern structural conditions over
time and their similarities with the ones of other contemporary regions.⁵²

Far from being characterized by inertia, the economics of the nineteenth-century
Mezzogiorno were, according to revisionist historians, continuously adapting to the
fluctuations of the world-market. Southern Italian landowners -- at least some of
them -- were examples of rational economic actors forced to cope with constrains
deriving from the fragmentation of the internal market, the lack of infrastructures
and the natural disruption due to the population’s pressure on the land.⁵³ The most
controversial study -- Latifundium by Marta Petrusewicz -- claims that self-
sufficiency and adaptability to changing market conditions characterized the great
landed estates which once were emblematic of the idea of southern backwardness.⁵⁴

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⁵¹ This expression has been used to summarize the substance of the “Southern Question”.
⁵² The most recent overview of revisionist historiography is J. Morris, “Challenging Meridionalismo:
Constructing a New History for Southern Italy”, in R. Lumley and J. Morris, eds., The New History of
the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997). See also A.
⁵³ The two best overviews of the economics of the South in the nineteenth century done by revisionist
historians are B. Salvemini, “Note sul concetto di Ottocento meridionale” in L’innovazione precaria,
⁵⁴ See Petrusewicz, “Introduction”, in Latifundium; the author links her work to studies such as Fogel
and Engerman’s Time on the Cross (4).
Above all, revisionist historians have stressed the continuity of the dialectic between center and periphery in the pre- and post-unification governments. They have shed new light on the southern monarchy’s attempts at modernizing the infrastructure after the Restoration of 1815, and they have shown how other Italian states pursued similar policies in the post-Napoleonic period. The failure of these attempts, due to strong opposition on the side of the local elites, accounts for the collapse of most of the Restoration governments and for the success of the program of national unification.

In revisionist writing, the process of state formation has substituted the concept of “Risorgimento” as a national movement. Revisionist historians have, therefore, denied to both Italy and the South their historical identity: the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies -- the political expression of the Southern region between 1815 and 1860 -- was but one of the pre-unification regions swallowed into a process of state formation which only accidentally gave origin to the aberration of the Italian nation-state. 55

This seems to be the weakest point in the revisionist argument. The truth is that the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was the single largest and most prestigious political entity on Italian territory at the moment of unification. The heart of the matter is the fact that, despite these characteristics, the history of the South was shaped by external forces primarily located in the North, which, in the end, conquered it at the price of a bloody “civil war” 56 and created a permanent difference in the experiences of the two parts of the new Italian nation-state. 57 Southern Italian “identity”, therefore, is in this respect similar to the identity of other regions of the world which

55 See Lucy Riall’s critique of the revisionist version of the Risorgimento in Riall, The Italian Risorgimento, 76-82. Several recent studies reevaluate the role of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during the Risorgimento; the most important are E. Di Ciommo, La Nazione Possibile. Mezzogiorno e questione nazionale nel 1848 (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1993); M. Petrusewicz, Come il Meridione divenne una Questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1998); and A. Spagnoletti, Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997). See also the review essay by P. Mieli, “La Sinistra riscopre i Borbone”, La Stampa 16 November 1997.

56 By “civil war” here I intend the general upheaval which followed unification in most of the southern provinces and was settled only with a massive military effort from Piedmont between 1861 and 1865. See J. A. Davis, Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy (London: Macmillan, 1988), 178-184; and J. Dickie, “A World at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage”, in Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900 (London: MacMillan, 1999).

57 This is, of course, a generalization, which does not take in account the particular role of Sicily in the politics of the Italian Risorgimento.
were defeated in the process of either state-formation or state-consolidation, such as the American South.

The revisionist approach carries both advantages and disadvantages regarding the history of the Italian South. While it has contributed enormously in giving us a better understanding of southern society and economics both before and after unification, the flourishing of local studies related to it has made many historians lose sight of the “big picture”. In their attempts to explain the rationality behind the process of decision-making of some southern entrepreneurs, landowners and civil servants, revisionists have focused too much attention on their particular unit of analysis and they have only occasionally seen it in an Italian, European, or world perspective. Therefore, there is a pressing need to unify all the local studies on southern society and economics by treating them as part of the history of pre- and post-unification Italy within the context of the expansion of the capitalist world-system on a global scale.

Comparing the nineteenth-century Italian south with other regions that have shared the same position of periphery within the world-system at the same point in time is a way of continuing the process of dismantling previous assumptions begun by revisionist historians. In the context of the expansion of the capitalist world-system, the history of the southern Italian periphery displays social and economic characteristics which render it similar to many other regions, and therefore not “peculiarly” backward or underdeveloped.

Unfortunately, very little comparative work has been done so far by Italian revisionist historians. Although there are general articles on the comparative method written by some scholars, there are still very few studies which address comparative issues, in spite of the revisionist claim of an interest in comparative

history.\textsuperscript{61} Even these studies, however, are not strictly comparative, in that the authors merely hint at possible comparisons of nineteenth-century southern institutions -- such as the landed estates and the ideology of the family -- with similar ones in other countries, without fully developing them.\textsuperscript{62} Other studies occasionally bring in a comparative point in order to show the similarity between a particular aspect of southern Italian society and something analogous in another country.\textsuperscript{63} The lack of comparative study, therefore, reflects a deficiency in Southern Italian historiography which needs to be corrected if we want to definitively discard the myth of a "distinctive" southern path to modernization. By highlighting features which it had in common with other peripheries of the world, comparison gives the Italian South a real "identity" which it shared with a number of different regions. This identity makes it the ideal case for comparison with the nineteenth-century American South, which, in addition to being a periphery, had a similar inheritance of defeat in the context of American national history and a similar social structure based on a small elite owning an immense amount of land.

\textit{Toward a New Paradigm: Comparative History of Agrarian Societies}

Let us now try to situate the comparison between the American South and the Italian South in a broader perspective. This is the best way to answer questions such as: "What do we look for in comparing these two particular case-studies?" and "How do we go about comparing them?" In fact, we need to look at them in the context of the politics, economics and society of the nineteenth-century world if we want to create a new theoretical "paradigm" which discards the "peculiar" assumptions of the American and Italian historiographies.

\textsuperscript{61} The two foremost cultural institutions which work to divulgate the revisionist approach to southern Italy through their publications -- the I.M.E.S. (Istituto Meridionale di Storia e Scienze Sociali) and the Istituto per la Storia Comparata delle Società Rurali -- have among their declaration of principles the practice of comparative history.

\textsuperscript{62} This is the main problem with both Petrusewicz's \textit{Latifundium} and Macry's \textit{Ottocento}; both of them address specific comparative issues only in the introduction.

\textsuperscript{63} Such is the case in G. Montroni, \textit{Gli uomini del re. La nobiltà napoletana nell'Ottocento} (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1996), which, in spite of its excellent introduction, returns only occasionally to some of the comparative points raised.
Over twenty years ago, David Potter wrote an article in which he analyzed the nature and significance of the American Civil War in the context of nineteenth-century liberalism and nationalism. He argued that "first, it turned the tide which had been running against nationalism for forty years or ever since Waterloo; and second, it forged a bond between nationalism and liberalism at a time when it appeared that the two might draw apart in opposite directions." 64 He linked the forces that determined the victory of the North in the American Civil war to the ideologies of liberal nationalism that determined the unification of Italy: "the uprising of the North in 1861, and its decision to wage a war to preserve the Federal Union, coming in the same year in which Victor Emmanuel was crowned king of a united Italy, marked a turning of the tide which had been running against nationalism for the preceding forty-five years." 65 In analyzing the forces that opposed the process of nationalism in America and in Europe, he maintained that "in Europe, imperial forces sought to stamp out nationalism from above; in America, particularistic forces sought to resist it from below. It is perhaps because the opposition was centripetal in Europe and centrifugal in America that historians have tended to overlook the parallel triumphs of national unification, all within a period of twelve short years, in Italy, the United States, and Germany." 66

Since Potter wrote his article, nationalism has become a major issue in modern historiography; its links with liberalism, its pre-nineteenth century roots and its occasional resurgences have been analyzed in depth. However, there is still no study that looks at liberal nationalism as a phenomenon which characterized both Europe and America in the 1860s: the studies available are either very general in the presentation of the issue or simply restricted to the treatment of European countries.

In trying to link some of these studies to the suggestions made by Potter in his article, we can formulate three possible lines of enquiry. First, nationalism must be seen as an active process of creation of an "imagined community", in which a certain number of people start to feel related to one another and want to acknowledge this

66 Potter, "The American Civil War in the History of the Modern World", 290. The point has been restated recently by Carl Degler; see C. N. Degler, "The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification: The Problem of Comparison" in S. Forster and J. Nagler, eds., On the Road to Total
relation by building a nation. Second, the process of creation of a national community is directly linked to the “invention of a tradition” which justifies the claim of one region of a national territory to have the power over the others. Third, the process of nation-making is essentially a way of creating large unified labor markets called ‘national economies’; in Molinari’s words, “the division of humanity into autonomous nations is essentially economic”.

Italy and the United States underwent a process of national unification with similar features. What happened in the 1860s in both countries was the victory of one idea of imagined community, one idea of national tradition, and one idea of national economy over another. In both countries the North imposed upon the South its idea of nation-state in political, social and economic terms. This idea had its foundations in the nineteenth-century ideology of liberalism, intended as “both a network of political and social models with the idea of self-responsible person at its center, and … as a political movement of the middle classes striving for a society of independent citizens.” As such, liberal nationalism could only clash with the conservative ideology of American planters and southern Italian noblemen. “In a certain sense, then, the landed planters of the South who opposed American nationalism were not unlike the landed proprietors in central Europe who opposed German or Polish or Italian or Hungarian or Bohemian nationalism. All of them were traditionalist. All feared that nationalism was linked with a democracy that they distrusted. All feared to release from the bottle the genii of manhood suffrage, of

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71 Regarding the Italian case, the reference is mainly to the more traditional part of the Neapolitan nobility, which Giovanni Montroni calls Gli Uomini del Re (The King’s Men) and which one can fruitfully compare with the oldest part of the Virginian aristocracy. The only option that conservative elites had -- other than opposing it -- was to absorb the language of liberalism and transform it into a powerful rhetorical device to use against state intrusion in local affairs, as it happened in Sicily and South Carolina, where noblemen and planters were at the forefront of nationalist movements. See below.
democratic equality, of social mobility, of universal education -- and, in the South, of emancipation of four million slaves" 72.

Comparing agrarian societies, such as the pre-1860 American South and the Italian South, allows one to investigate the social and political ideology of landed elites within the context of the formation of the modern nation-state. In this respect, what makes the comparison consistent and interesting is the relation between conservative ideology and liberal nationalism. In both souths, a more conservative version of nationalism characterized the older sections of the landed elites, whilst a more modern version of nationalism, which included some liberal traits, characterized the more recently formed sections. These two versions of nationalism cut deeply across the two landed elites and coexisted in mutual opposition. 73 In contrast to the general situation of the two souths, in South Carolina and Sicily a compromise between conservatism and liberalism was functional to the constitution of a homogenous landed elite with nationalistic aspirations; in fact, in the two regions, the ideology of “elitist nationalism” enabled the older and newer sections of the propertied classes to adapt the nineteenth-century rhetoric of liberalism for conservative purposes in their common struggles against the suppression of local autonomy carried on by the federal government and the Bourbon monarchy. 74

As a whole, the two southern elites were part of a world that was bound to disappear and yet had enough vitality to adapt to the continuously accelerating changes of the nineteenth century. All agrarian societies to which the two elites belonged were at the periphery of the capitalist world-system, and most of them became part of future core or semi-periphery states through processes of national unification. Most agrarian societies, in fact, became part of unified national markets between 1815 and 1917. Broadly speaking, this time-span falls into the third stage in


73 This is the main argument advanced in Chapters Three and Four.

74 Such a comparison is fundamental for the main argument advanced in the present work and will be pursued in detail in Chapters Five and Six. On the nationalism of South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites, see J. Edgar, South Carolina: A History (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); and F. Renda, Storia della Sicilia dal 1860 al 1970, Vol. 1: I caratteri originali e gli anni dell’unificazione italiana (Palermo Sellerio, 1984).
Wallerstein’s periodization of the world-economy. In the early part of this stage (1815-1873) Britain was the center of the world-economy and “the workshop of the world”. Peripheral regions, such as southern Italy and southern United States, were in the same relation of dependency to it: they were producing and exporting to Britain most of their raw materials.

Nineteenth century liberal nationalism was in part the result of the response of more industrialized and capitalist oriented areas, such as the north of the United States and the north of Italy, to the British challenge. In order to compete with Britain, nineteenth-century states needed national economies and national markets of the same size or even bigger. The primacy of Britain in the world market between 1815 and 1873 is one of the reason why the processes of national unifications happened in the 1860s. Italy became a unified national economy by that decade, while the United States became a unified labor market after the civil war of 1861-65.

By 1873, England no longer was the only power at the core of the capitalist world-system. Some countries -- such as the United States -- shared with her the same central position within it, while others -- such as Italy -- had moved to a better position within the semi-periphery. Within this context, agrarian societies, such as the American South and the Italian South, were taken into the boundaries of both new national political entities and new national economic entities. This process took a very short time in historical terms, but changed more or less completely the intimate structures of these societies. Within a period of fifty years --from 1815 to 1865 -- the landed elites of both souths, and of other peripheries of the world-system, adapted to the powerful pressures brought on them by the ideologies of liberalism and nationalism, and managed to survive.

76 This argument relies on Kondratieff’s theory of cycles with phases of expansion (A) and recession (B) within the overall development of the world-economy. In Kondratieff’s Second Cycle (roughly from 1848/52 to 1870/75), when Britain was the “workshop of the world”, there took place a reorganization of the semi-peripheries with Civil War in the United States and Unification in Italy and Germany, which profited from the period of economic expansion to build competitive national markets. See P. J. Taylor, Political Geography, World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality (London: Longman, 1993), 13-27.
77 See L. Cafagna, Dualismo e sviluppo nella storia d’Italia (Venice: Marsilio, 1989).
How and how much they changed and how they managed to survive are precisely the kinds of questions which can find a proper answer only in a comparative study. The study of the conservative ideologies of peripheral landed elites as a response to changing economic, social, and cultural conditions within the world-system, actually, opens a relatively new area to historical inquiry, since, in the words of urban historian J. Walton, “the circulation of ideas in the world-system has received much less attention than the circulation of either commodities or capital.” In other words, ideas circulated together with commodities, traveling from center to periphery and all over the peripheral areas of the world-system. It was the circulation of revolutionary ideas of freedom and equal rights that created a virtual ideological bond among all the oppressed laborers who struggled to have more control over both lives and lands. At the same time, the circulation of conservative ideas related to the immutability of the social order and to the necessity to keep it created a similar ideological bond between the landed propertied classes who strove to keep their power over the lower strata.

In this respect, what linked the landed elites of the American South, the Italian South, and other agrarian societies was the fact that “by 1861 the slaveholders were determined to defend their property and power. In this sense, they stood alongside the slaveholding planters of Brazil and Cuba, alongside the Russian lords ... and ... alongside such dying, but still deadly, landholding classes as those of Poland, Hungary, Italy and Japan, which commanded unfree or only technically free labor”. Therefore, paraphrasing Eugene Genovese, we can say that only by focusing on the nature of the ruling class of each agrarian society can we adequately treat the major problems inherent in comparative historical analysis.

81 Fox-Genovese and Genovese, Fruits of Merchant Capital, 394; and Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made, 112.
Chapter Two
Setting the Scene: The Transformation of Two Peripheries

This chapter provides an overview of the social and economic history of the elites of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno up to the end of the Napoleonic wars. Its aim is to introduce several themes -- the importance of land, the nature of the patriarchal system, and the relation between family and honor -- which will be examined in far more detail later on in the project. During a time span of roughly two centuries, the two elites underwent a series of transformations that permanently altered their structures and world-view. Changes in the dynamics of the world-system, in fact, transformed the composition of the landed aristocracies of the two souths, while influences from outside helped spread new ideas about labor and family relations. As a result, after a period of acute crisis and adjustment, the two elites became more conscious of their distinctive identities and more flexible in the use of their power.

Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries the Italian South and the American South went through a series of epochal transformations. They both became fully incorporated into the capitalist world-economy as agricultural-exporting peripheral zones. Both of them saw the consolidation of landed elites, who built their fortunes by combining commercial activity with the acquisition of land. Although in Southern Italy the process had started long before that of the American South, by the mid-eighteenth century landed proprietors dominated both souths, owning huge estates and enjoying patriarchal authority over their laborers and within their own families. Enlightenment, together with first the spread of liberal ideas, and then the American and French revolutions, brought a series of changes which reshaped the composition of both landed elites, their economic performance, their role in the society and their political relations with the central power of the national state.

Although there are major differences in the causes and effects of these changes, the ultimate result in both regions was the emergence of a new group of landed proprietors at the beginning of the nineteenth century. By 1815, the golden age of
wheat was definitely over in Southern Italy, just as the golden age of tobacco and rice was definitely over in the American South. The capitalist world-system had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars with Britain as the sole dynamic power in the core and with a few semi-peripheries -- such as the north of the United States -- which were proceeding up the road of industrialization. It was the growing need of both core and semi-peripheries for new kinds of products, such as cotton, olive oil, citrus, sulfur and wine, that was to make the fortunes of new elites at the periphery.

At the Periphery of Two Empires

When, in 1607, British settlers founded their first colony in the American south, the south of Italy had been under direct Spanish domination for more than fifty years. When the American colonies started their war for independence from Britain, in 1775, the south of Italy had been an independent kingdom under a Spanish dynasty for more than forty years. By that time, Britain and Spain had each influenced and shaped the civilization of the two souths for nearly two centuries.

A few general points can be made. First, because the relation of the two countries with the two regions was one of the metropolis with its colonies, or core with the periphery, the influence in terms of cultural and social values was particularly strong. Indeed, it continued long after the two souths achieved their independence. Second, in terms of economics, the fact of having simultaneously become peripheries of an empire and peripheries of the world-system caused both souths to be continuously dependent upon external factors for their economic growth. On the other hand, in terms of politics, this same dependency helped build a sense of identity, especially as resentment grew against decisions taken by the metropolis.

However, there are several important differences between the two cases. First, and most obvious, is the fact that Britain colonized a newly discovered region that was settled largely with a population of lower and middle class people, servants and slaves. In contrast, the Italian South had a very long history behind it and a native population which had created over the centuries a complex and highly stratified society based on rank. At the highest level, therefore, the ruling elites of the two souths were influenced in different ways by British and Spanish supremacy in society and culture. While in the American South, the influence of Britain was
ingrained in the very settlers of the region, who were British themselves, in the Italian South the influence of Spain came through the Viceroy and through a number of Spanish noble families, who intermarried with the native nobility and eventually settled down.

Second and most important, is the fact that Britain was the center of an expanding commercial empire, while Spain was the center of a retreating dynastic empire. Consequently, the difference in terms of economic influence, and even more in terms of cultural influence, was great. While the Spanish were concerned mainly with exploitation of local resources and alliances with ruling elites in order to sustain their dynastic wars, the British focused on promoting new enterprises and building an advantageous commercial relationship between the colonies and the metropolis in order to further sustain the economic growth of the mother-country. However, despite the mercantile orientation of British culture as it spread in the American South, in the end it produced a class of landed proprietors, which, by the eighteenth century, was behaving in a distinctively aristocratic way -- that is, in a way similar and comparable to the landed proprietors of the Italian South at the same point in time. Within the context of the rising British empire, a group of untitled proprietors transformed itself in an aristocracy of wealth, while within the context of the waning Spanish empire a titled aristocracy never fully transformed itself in a group of landed proprietors.

During the 'long sixteenth century' (1450-1650)¹, a complex interrelation of different factors -- among which were demographic growth and geographic expansion, and an upward price rise -- gave birth to a European world-economy characterized by a capitalist mode of production.² Within this, there emerged a distinction between a core of stronger states and a semi-periphery and periphery of weaker states. In the first half of the sixteenth century, both Spain and Portugal were core states, while the rest of Europe and the newly acquired American colonies were at the semi-periphery and periphery of the world-system. Then, the failed attempt of

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¹ The term comes from Fernand Braudel.
² “What was happening in Europe from the 16th to the 18th century is that over a large geographical area going from Poland in the northeast westwards and southwards throughout Europe and including parts of the Western Hemisphere as well, there grew up a world-economy with a single division of labor within which there was a world market, for which men produced largely agricultural products for sale and profit.” See I. Wallerstein, “The Rise and Future Demise of the Capitalist World-system”, Comparative Studies in Society and History 16:4 (1974), 403.
Charles V to transform the European world-economy in a world empire under the Habsburg dynasty brought a shift in the balance of power within the core. The effort to control an enormous extension of territories with an efficient bureaucracy and a large army brought the Spanish state -- whose economy was not particularly advanced -- to bankruptcy and split the Habsburg empire. After the 1550's, Spain gradually fell into semi-peripheral status, while its Southern Italian colonies became the periphery of a decadent dynastic power.³

Spain’s place within the core was taken over by the states in Northwest Europe, which were better located in respect to the Atlantic routes, and which already had commenced a process of agricultural diversification and proto-industrial production - textiles, ship building, and metal wares. By 1640, two main powers were struggling for commercial hegemony within the core: the Netherlands and Britain. Britain emerged as the victor, not only because of its superior agricultural and industrial structures, but also because of the strength of its state machinery. At the end of the seventeenth century, therefore, Britain’s colonies in the American South had become fully incorporated in the European world-economy as peripheries of a rising commercial power.⁴

The single most important consequence of the process briefly sketched above was the discontinuity between economic and political institutions.⁵ Within the single global economy of the capitalist world-system, different state aggregations were competing in the international arena. The strength of the absolutist monarchy and of the bureaucratic apparatus of the core states marked a sharp contrast with the

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⁴ A long standing controversy centers upon the significance of colonies and commerce for the development of early industrial capitalism in Britain. While Eric Williams has argued that the profits from the slave trade with the colonies were essential for Britain’s Industrial Revolution, Robert Brenner has written that it was the transformation of social relations in the countryside, rather than the colonial markets, which made industrialization possible in Britain. See E. Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), and R. Brenner, “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development” in T. H. Aston and C. H. Philpin, eds., The Brenner Debate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); see also, for a recent reappraisal of both hypotheses, R. Blackburn, The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800 (London: Verso, 1997), 509-581.

decline and absence of state authority in the semi-periphery and periphery. In the long term, Spain left its Southern Italian colonies a legacy of a weak semi-peripheral state apparatus, which instilled within the elites a sense of skepticism about the need for centralized institutions. On the other hand, the strength of the English core state provided the elites of the North American colonies with a model against which to measure themselves in both constitutional and administrative matters. However different these situations were at this point in time, they clearly can be seen at the root of similar and comparable processes of resistance of peripheral elites to centralized state institutions in the Italian South and in the American South in the nineteenth century.

Within the capitalist mode of production, characterized by a single division of labor spread on a global scale, core states and peripheral and semi-peripheral states were different not only in terms of strength of state apparatus, but also in the way labor was “recruited and recompensed in the labor market”. In the core areas wage labor was the norm, while in the semi-peripheries and peripheries, sharecropping and various forms of coerced labor, ranging from serfdom to slavery, were widespread. Therefore, while wage labor became associated with diversified agricultural and industrial activities within the core areas where workers were employed in the production and trade of finished products, unfree labor became synonymous with mono-cultural agriculture within the peripheral areas where workers were forced to participate in the process of production and exportation of raw materials to the core countries.

The mid-seventeenth century was crucial in the process of defining areas characterized by different labor relations on both sides of the Atlantic. The economic

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7 According to P. Chaunu, “for Castile, its Mediterranean extensions, dynamic elements in the first half of the 16th century, become gradually, by the beginning of the 17th century, passive elements for which one must pay, maintained by means of soldiers and money, always ready to rebel (as Aragon in 1640) whenever one asks of them an extra effort for the common defense.” Quotation from Wallerstein, The Modern World-System, Vol. I, . See also the classic study by H. G. Koenigsberger, The Government of Sicily Under Philip II of Spain (London: Viking, 1951).
9 Wallerstein, “The rise and future demise of the capitalist world-system”, 404.
10 Following many of Wallerstein’s suggestions, comparative historians now tend to consider the emergence and consolidation of various forms of unfree labor in the modern era as different, but related, phenomena. For the most recent discussion of these issues, see the essays in M. L. Bush, ed.,
downturn that started around 1620 reversed the trend of the previous century in terms of demographic-geographic expansion and upward price rise. This, together with the necessity of fighting an almost uninterrupted series of major international conflicts, eventually brought about a strengthening of the bureaucratic and executive apparatus of the core states and the expansion and consolidation of mercantilist policies for the support of internal agricultural and industrial production and for the protection of privileged commercial relationship with the colonies.\footnote{1}

In the peripheral regions of the New World, the mercantilist policies of three different core states -- England, the United Provinces, and France -- competed with each other throughout the seventeenth century, stimulating and protecting commercial ties with colonies specializing in the production of goods particularly valuable on the world market. Sugar became the most prized one, and the British Caribbean islands exceeded all other colonies in its production. The same occurred, later on, with tobacco and rice, respectively in the Chesapeake and the Carolinas, the two nuclei of what was to become the American South. Crop specialized colonies in mainland North America quickly became characterized by large monocultural plantations, run by new ‘creole’ elites coming from various social backgrounds, who built their fortune recruiting cheap labor, initially in the form of both voluntary white indentured servitude and African slavery. After 1660, however, a series of factors -- among which a shortage of white labor due to changing political and economic conditions in Europe, the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, and the demographic expansion of the American born slave population -- led the landed elites in the Chesapeake to tighten the racial barriers and to rely exclusively on African slaves.\footnote{12}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{1} The literature on these issues is enormous and is well summarized in E. R. Wolf, \textit{Europe and the People without History} (Berkeley: University of California Press 1981).
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Economic downturn, recession, and war had a very different impact on semi-
peripheral and peripheral European states. The state apparatus of many of them
weakened, and in some cases even collapsed, so that continuous wars resulted in
regular intrusions of stronger foreign powers into their internal affairs. Furthermore,
the state centralized institutions were powerless in front of the autocratic pretensions
of the regional landed elites, while most of the commercial activities resided in the
hands of foreign merchants. Production for the world-market provoked the
appearance of large mono-cultural landed estates, where cheap labor was recruited
and controlled through a whole series of coercive laws.13

In the extreme periphery of southern Italy, economic recession led to the
disappearance of some specialized agricultural production, such as sugar, and to the
decline of others, such as wheat. Together with increased pressure on land and labor
power, which in the end gave origin to both the so called “refeudalization” and the
“commercialization of the fief”, the decline in prices and income forced most of the
old feudal lords to give up direct management and rent their properties. It also
favored the accumulation of lands by proprietors-entrepreneurs and foreign --
especially Genoese -- merchants, who in a few generations became part of the
established ennobled elite. Old and new barons, relatively free from the constraints
of a weak Spanish state, joined together in a renewed exploitation of the peasantry,
which in most places was still obliged to provide some corvees, and caused a series
of revolts -- the most famous of which occurred in Naples in 1647 -- against both
local and central authorities.14

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13 "While the period of economic downturn led the core countries along the path of nationalism
(mercantilism) and constitutional compromise within the upper strata, with the consequence of a
lowered ability of the lower strata to rebel, the weakness of the east European states meant that they
could neither seek the advantages of a mercantilistic tactic nor guarantee any compromise within the
upper strata. This led the peripheral areas in the direction of sharpening class conflict, increased
regionalism and decreased national consciousness, the search for internal scapegoats, and acute
restiveness of the peasantry... the same thing was true of the old peripheral areas of southern Europe

14 This process is described clearly in M. Aymard, "La transizione dal feudalesimo al capitalismo" in
R. Romano and C. Vivanti, eds., Storia d'Italia, Annali 1: Dal feudalesimo al capitalismo (Turin:
Einaudi, 1978). See also R. Villari, La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli (Bari: Laterza, 1967) and P.
Land, Family, and Honor among Eighteenth-Century Southern Patriarchs

The economic downturn that had characterized the seventeenth century was succeeded by a period of relative prosperity, demographic expansion, and increase in agricultural exports on both sides of the Atlantic. This, indeed, was the 'golden age' of many peripheral landed elites, whose highly sophisticated and extremely luxurious cultural style was based on the brutal exploitation of workers on large countryside estates. It was, in fact, during the eighteenth century that the large landowners of most of the European colonies in the Americas started to acquire the definite character of creole aristocracies, different from, but related to, the old and new aristocracies of Europe. In particular, in the American South this period witnessed “the maturation of the ruling [slaveholding] class and its achievements of self-consciousness”. 15

Land was the basis of power, in both America and Europe. The first settlers in the Chesapeake were well aware of the importance of landowning, since in the English society from which they came, as in southern Italy, land nearly always was possessed by some high authority. Some of the Chesapeake settlers were gentlemen whose families already owned a considerable amount of land in their mother country; although they were few in number, they provided the early colonies with a European model of social hierarchy soon imitated by enriched commoners and indentured servants. The large contingent of Royalist Cavaliers, who escaped Puritan oppression in England and emigrated in Virginia during the governorship of Sir William Berkeley (1642-1676), further reinforced the trend toward “aristocracy”. 16

The first settlers in the Carolinas -- the other area of the American South penetrated by British colonization -- were even more aware of the importance of land. The eight Lords Proprietors, as they were called, were granted the territories located south of Virginia directly by Charles II. After having attempted

unsuccesfiully to create a hereditary nobility, they drew immigrants and fortune-seekers from various places. Several of these came from Barbados, where once successful planters with hundreds of slaves were forced to leave because of population pressure; others – like the Manigaults, for example – were French Huguenots who sought to escape religious oppression.

Former planters, gentlemen and cavaliers took most of the best lands, since the colonial governments granted the largest land patents to the most influential individuals; these soon came to hold the top offices in the local councils. By the end of the seventeenth century, landed aristocracies dominated both Virginia and South Carolina. Land distribution favored the Carters, the Lees, the Draytons, the Pinckneys, and other prominent planter families who had come either from the English gentry or from a comparable upper class background. Land was the crucial factor in the definition of social status, and from the outset Virginia’s and South Carolina’s “new” American societies showed attitudes toward land and rank typical of the Old World.

The boom in tobacco and rice production and the replacement of white indentured servitude with slavery at the end of the seventeenth century reinforced the class consciousness of the Virginian and South Carolinian gentries. Although they never became rentiers, by mid-eighteenth century, “gentlemen chose not to work on their farms, because their slaves produced all they needed and let them free to assume political leadership.”

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17 The Fundamental Constitutions, drafted by John Locke, provided for the establishment of a stratified society, with hereditary titles such as Cacique and Landgrave. Although they never proofed applicable, the influence of the ideas held in the Constitutions on South Carolina’s subsequent history was remarkable. See E. Mc Crady, South Carolina under Proprietary Government, 1670-1719 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969).
19 "The great majority of Virginia’s upper elite came from families in the upper ranks of English society. Of 152 Virginians who held top offices in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, at least sixteen were connected to aristocratic families, and 101 were the sons of baronets, knights and the rural gentry of England." See Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 216. In South Carolina, by the end of the seventeenth century former Barbadian planters had established a stable landed elite, that dominated the political life of the colony. See R. Waterhouse, A New World Gentry: The Making of a Merchant and Planter Class in South Carolina, 1670-1770 (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1989), 172-190.
20 A. Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-
local politics became entangled together in the world-view of the wealthiest planters. Political power required prestige, and prestige was based on wealth and landowning:

The most successful tobacco and rice planters, like Robert Carter and John Drayton, owned thousands of acres of land, which they sold or leased to new immigrants or poorer whites, while actively engaging in various forms of trade. 21

As the process of accumulation of land and capital continued throughout the eighteenth century, the Virginian and South Carolinian elites became more settled; wealth and large slave-based tobacco and rice plantations became more and more synonymous, and a distinctive way of life associated with them emerged. The wealthiest planters, freed from the necessity of continuous supervision by the employment of overseers and by the higher percentage of native-born slaves present on their plantations, now could dedicate themselves to various forms of leisure activity. They consciously used these to adapt the model of English gentry life to New World conditions. In the process, they built a distinctive aristocratic culture, centered around the cultivation of tobacco and rice.

As T. H. Breen has convincingly argued, status, landowning, and slave-based tobacco cultivation were almost synonymous in eighteenth century Virginia. 22 Tobacco growing gave planters a sense of identity, of belonging to an extremely wealthy and restricted landed elite and sharing with it the same material culture and public recognition. Because growing tobacco was a difficult task requiring both special skills and fortune, the reputation of a planter easily could be ruined by improper management or by a crop failure. Landon Carter’s diaries are a characteristic example of the pride which tobacco growing planters took in directly managing their own estates: “I know in this neighborhood people are very fond of speaking of their neighbor’s crops and I am certain mine has been so characterized. However, when I ride out, I declare I do not see any so good”. 23 Indeed, it is clear

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23 J. P. Greene, ed., The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778 (Charlottesville:
from both Landon Carter's and George Washington's diaries that "a man's reputation was only as good as the tobacco he grew." 24

Land was as important in the Neapolitan Kingdom 25 as in the American South during the early modern era. A hierarchical society based primarily on landownership had evolved through the centuries into a highly complex system in which old and new privileges created an extremely heterogeneous landed elite. Land, however, was worth very little without a noble title. Much of it was in the hands of old families of *baroni*, who maintained feudal rights over local villages and laborers because of their ancient and prestigious titles. However, since the beginning of Spanish domination, in the sixteenth century, the Crown had pursued two different policies in order to tie the wealthiest representatives of the Neapolitan elites to the empire. On one side, it had given especially prestigious recognition to the high nobles who were loyal to the king, while on the other side it had bestowed noble titles upon foreign families -- especially Genoese -- who had acquired high status through accumulation of land and mercantile activity in the Neapolitan kingdom. 26

Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries a local noble family in the Neapolitan kingdom could acquire high noble status by having its members serve in the kingdom's bureaucracy and then pursuing a careful policy in the acquisition of land. The Muscettola of Leporano, for example, were a family belonging to the provincial aristocracy of the Amalfitan coast, near Naples. After profiting from various mercantile activities, at the beginning of the fifteenth century members of one branch of the family moved to Naples and entered the Kingdom's administration working as civil servants and then ambassadors for the Habsburg Kings. In recognition of their service, the Muscettola were given a feudal estate in Terra di Lavoro; at the same time, the family intermarried with some of the most important

University Press of Virginia, 1965), vol. II.


25 Although "Neapolitan Kingdom" is a term that usually refers only to the continental Mezzogiorno, by 1734 the Crown of Naples and the Crown of Sicily were united under the Bourbon dynasty. Therefore, in this chapter, I use "Neapolitan Kingdom" to mean the whole territory which in 1815 became the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

members of the Neapolitan nobility, especially the powerful Carafa. In 1626, Sergio Muscettola acquired the feudal estate of Leporano in Apulia and was given the title of Prince. With this act, the Muscettola became part of the high nobility of the Kingdom. Sergio’s successors enlarged even further the family patrimony and continued to be influential among the Neapolitan aristocracy throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 27

In spite of the successful case of the Muscettola, either loyalty to an out of favor faction or a faulty marriage policy could reverse the fortune that a family had enjoyed in previous centuries. This meant that its members had to carefully move from an obscure position to one of prestige through a combination of mercantile activity and land lease. 28 In both cases, noble families were influenced by attitudes that belonged to the non titled merchant-oriented elite, so that, by the eighteenth century, it was difficult to distinguish the economic and social behavior of these merchant baroni from the one of the non titled patriciate. 29

This ambiguity in attitudes between titled and non-titled landed elites reflects the simultaneous occurrence of the two phenomena of the “refeudalization” and “commercialization of the fief” mentioned earlier. Just when the crisis of the general seventeenth century restructuring of the world-economy precipitated a general shift of feudal lords to absentee landownership in the peripheries of eastern and southern Europe, the fact of being part of this same world-economy forced members of the noble families to behave like merchants responding to new market conditions in order to keep up their status. 30 All this reflected on the way landholding changed. In the great landed estates of the fifteenth and seventeenth century, land was either directly cultivated or given on lease, while its production of wheat went directly to the kingdom’s capital -- the large city of Naples. After the mid-seventeenth century crisis, a new economic expansion (which lasted until the end of the eighteenth century) led the titled families to consider the income coming from their landed

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28 See for example the case of the Tocco of Montemiletto, described in V. Del Vasto, Baroni nel tempo: I Tocco di Montemiletto dal XVI al XVIII secolo (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995).
30 See Del Vasto, Baroni nel tempo, 71-75. See also Aymard, “La transizione dal feudalesimo al capitalismo”.
estates as only one of many forms of investment. The economic power of the
nobility, therefore, was founded both on various forms of mercantile activity and
land-lease. However, social status was thoroughly associated with the amount and
quality of land owned. Indeed, we can say that social status deriving from
landownership assimilated the old families of baroni turned merchant to the recently
ennobled merchant families, much more than mercantile activity itself. Through
massive acquisitions of land, in fact, ennobled merchants became fully incorporated
in the southern Italian nobility and acted as feudal lords who exercised their rights in
an even more ruthless way than the old baroni.

Except for a few areas where olive oil and wine production always had been
preeminent, most of the Neapolitan Kingdom was cultivated with wheat. Until the
end of the eighteenth century wheat was the single most important agricultural
product. It was grown for both the internal consumption of the kingdom’s cities and
for export in the world market. The economic and demographic growth of the
eighteenth century actually reinforced the role of wheat in the overall economic life
of the kingdom. Since wheat was the main crop grown on the large landed estates --
the latifondi -- its production was controlled by the great landowners -- the
latifondisti -- who were mainly responsible for the almost complete dependence of
the southern economy on the international demand for this crop. The wheat trade
built the fortunes of the great landowners and great merchants; at the same time, it
helped create a distinct aristocratic culture and mentality which lived its last glorious
moments in the eighteenth century.

It is clear from the sources available that large scale wheat growing, ownership
of large landed estates, and high social and political status were inextricably linked
in eighteenth century southern Italy. Contemporary documents and administrative
papers belonging to the archives of the most prominent families attach such
importance to large scale wheat production that one cannot help but draw a parallel

31 See A. Lepre, “Azienda feudale ed azienda agraria nel Mezzogiorno continentale fra Cinquecento e
Ottocento”, in A. Massafra, ed., Problemi di storia delle campagne meridionali nell’età moderna e
contemporanea (Bari: Dedalo, 1981).
33 On some of these issues, see M. Aymard, “Il Sud e i circuiti del grano” in P. Bevilacqua ed., Storia
dell’agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea. Vol. I: Spazi e Paesaggi (Venice: Marsilio, 1989), 755-
with Breen’s "tobacco mentality" in eighteenth-century Virginia. In her particular study of the archives of the feudal estates of Terra d'Otranto, Maria Antonietta Visceglia has insisted that we should think about "feudal income ... [as] essentially landed income." In fact, it was the income deriving from wheat-grown fiefs that gave the feudal aristocracy its power and status. Although southern Italian aristocrats did not particularly pride themselves in successful management of their landed estates, they certainly boasted on their ownership of fiefs on which they could cultivate large quantities of wheat and exercise feudal rights. Indeed, wheat growing southern Italian *latifondisti* and tobacco growing American planters shared - together with other eighteenth-century peripheral landed elites -- a number of characteristics, including the identification of their social status with the income coming from their landed properties, the investment of a large part of this income in "symbolic capital", and the public control of society based on unwritten patriarchal rules.

Wheat growing *latifondisti* expressed their high social status by building large family palaces in Naples and in Palermo, buying expensive clothing, living off the rent from their fiefdoms, and enjoying their feudal rights over the peasants. Rent was the most important part of the income of the great proprietors and it was the main source of their wealth: the *latifondisti* rented sections of their territories, which were scattered throughout the south, at market prices in order to maximize their profits, without making any improvement to the land. Often, this system was insufficient to protect them from economic downfall; therefore, in order to keep up their standard of living, they were constantly in debt. Until the beginning of the nineteenth

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34 See M. A. Visceglia, "Rendita feudale e agricoltura in Puglia nell’età moderna (XVI-XVIII secolo)", *Società e Storia* 9 (1980), 537. See also Aymard, “Il Sud e i circuiti del grano”, 756-757.
35 See, for example, F. Di Napoli, “Libro Rosso di Resuttano” (1762) in O. Cancila, ed., *Noi e il Padrone* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1982). In the introduction (9-12) to the "Libro Rosso", Federico di Napoli, Prince of Resuttano, presents himself as a nobleman and owner of fiefs, intended as wheat-grown lands in which he could exercise his feudal rights.
37 Sicilian families were especially famous for their large and refined mansions located in the outskirts of Palermo. One of the most luxurious villas belonged to the Valguarena. See A. Morreale, *Famiglie feudali nell’età moderna. I principi di Valguarena* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1990). See also Chapter Five in the present work for a general treatment of Palermo’s villas.
century, however, noble properties were protected by the feudal law: although submerged by debt, a noble could retain his status because of the nominal rights he continued to enjoy on the land he once owned. Indeed, the possession and exercise of rights over the wheat growing *latifondi* of a fiefdom was what distinguished nobles from everybody else: “the fiefdoms preserve the nobility of the family”, said a mid-seventeenth century Neapolitan lawyer. 39

Since it was the ownership of land, and not its management, that gave nobles their status, the figure of the rentier, who typically allowed an administrator deal with the problems related to his land and peasants, was glorified in several treatises of this period. In one of the most important, *La Ragion Pastorale*, S. Di Stefano wrote “in our times, in order to keep a high esteem from other people, agriculture must be managed through others ... the citizen must provide in a way that he will not have to live continuously in the villas of the countryside... together with the rustic people, mean and low, whom he directs ”. 40 Several other contemporary works asserted that the nobles owned properties because they were virtuous, unlike the peasants, who were always described as dirty and vicious. This moralistic argument helped justifying the exploitation of the peasantry. Most peasants were forced to give back their long term land-lease at conditions that were extremely advantageous for the proprietors, or they were paid in kind with very little they could live on for the enormous amount of work they had done. Conditions were especially drastic among the many *braccianti*, the field-hands, who were often dying of hunger and poverty, as a result of their particularly harsh exploitation. 41

In contrast to the life of the poverty-stricken peasants working on the *latifondi*, the life of the eighteenth century nobles of the *Mezzogiorno*, who were nearly always rentiers, was largely dedicated to pleasurable past-times and various types of social
activity. In their family houses in the city, nobles entertained various distinguished guests, showing them how their refined manners combined well with the richness of their dwellings. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more appropriate definition of Bourdieu's 'symbolic capital' to characterize the level of sophistication and luxury attained by the Southern Italian nobility in the eighteenth century. In fact, most of the travelers' accounts of foreigners who visited Naples and Palermo at this time speak with amazement about the beauty of the palaces and the splendor of the life of the most influential landed aristocrats.42

Unlike Neapolitan and Sicilian nobles, who showed a predilection for urban life, Virginian and South Carolinian planters expressed the magnificence of their status building “big houses” at the center of their plantations. Their aristocratic way of life was much more dependent on the countryside, since they often directly supervised their own landed estates. Consequently, they invested their “symbolic capital” in the building of large country villas and in the struggle to achieve an idea of aristocracy which owed much to the English gentry. In marked contrast with the situation in southern Italy, in fact, in the American South social status was inextricably linked both to the possession of land and to its actual management.43 Consequently, what was prized was the acquisition of the necessary skills to grow a marketable quality of tobacco or rice. Planters competed with each other in showing what level of wealth they could achieve using their managing skills, just like southern Italian landed aristocrats competed with each other in showing what level of richness they could achieve living off their rents. Also, planters could spoil their achievements with an inaccurate prediction on the quality of the crops or with an erroneous market calculation, just as southern Italian aristocrats could end up in debt because of a

42 According to Bourdieu, “economic power is first and foremost the power to distance oneself from economic necessity; that is why it is always marked by the destruction of wealth, conspicuous consumption, waste and all forms of gratuitous luxury”; see Bourdieu, Distinction, 157. For a general introduction to travelers' accounts on the Italian South in eighteenth-nineteenth century see A. Placanica, “La capitale, il passato, il paesaggio. I viaggiatori come ‘fonte’ della storia meridionale”, Meridiana 1 (1987); Houel's Voyage Piquesque (1782-1787) and Goethe's Italienische Reise (1816-1829) are particularly significant for the description of the luxurious way of life of the Neapolitan and Palermitan elites in the 1770s and 1780s. See also Tuzet, Viaggiatori stranieri in Sicilia, 86-98, and 128-142.

43 This is an obvious generalization and one made for strictly comparative purposes. Even though South Carolinian rice planters were absentee for large parts of the year and Virginian tobacco planters had several properties which often were not directly supervised by them, it is possible to say that, in general, land management had a very different meaning in the American and the Italian South.
fluctuation in rent prices.\textsuperscript{44}

However, despite this mercantile attitude, Virginian planters – like South Carolinian planters -- were essentially a provincial elite eager to recreate the sophisticated life enjoyed by the English gentry. For this reason the diaries of the largest planters often included entries such as “I rose at about 5. I read Hebrew and Greek”, \textsuperscript{45} or “went hunting after breakfast and found a Fox at Muddy hole and killd [sic] her.” \textsuperscript{46} Unlike southern Italian nobles, who lived off the glories of their ancestors and their titles, Virginian and South Carolinian planters felt they had to prove that their standard of living was no lower than that of any Old World aristocracy in terms of cultural and leisure activities. \textsuperscript{47} Indeed, Timothy Ford -- an eighteenth century Northern American whose sister had married a prominent South Carolinian planter – spoke about “sporting with our guns”, “having tea” and being attended by servants, as a way of describing the relatively refined life of the South Carolinian elite and its strong ties to England. \textsuperscript{48}

However, both American and Italian southern societies were characterized by a striking contrast between this refined aristocratic ideal and the terrible living conditions of the workers on the large landed estates. American planters thought that they rightly enjoyed their power over people of African descent, whom they considered “naturally of a barbarous and cruel temper” \textsuperscript{49}, an argument which reminds one of the moralistic justifications for the exploitation of the southern Italian peasantry mentioned above. However, unlike southern Italian peasants, African Americans were racially discriminated against, enslaved, and forced to work


\textsuperscript{47} The best analysis of the way eighteenth-century planters were trying to catch up with the contemporaneous European nobility in terms of life-style is in P. Kolchin, Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Belknap, 1987), 158-164. The description of the planters 'aristocratic ideal' is particularly striking when viewed in comparison with the one of the Russian nobility. For an interesting treatment of some of the Virginian planters' peculiar leisure activities, such as horse racing and cock fighting, see Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 98-104.


\textsuperscript{49} “Hugh Jones on Agriculture and Slave Life in Virginia, 1724", in K. Ordahl Kuppermann, ed.,
in miserable conditions under the threat of continuous physical punishment. On the other hand, slaves seldom ran the risk of dying by hunger, like many *braccianti* did. Virginia colonist Hugh Jones made this point especially clear when he wrote “the Negroes are very numerous, some gentlemen having hundreds of them of all sorts, to whom they bring great profit; for the sake of which they are obliged to keep them well, and not overwork, starve, or famish them.” 50 Exploitation of slaves and peasants therefore took very different forms, but in the end they both resulted in a comparable kind of oppression, since both systems involved “a loss of worker’s control over his (or her) options for a [undefined] period of time”. 51 If we were to compare African American slaves and southern Italian peasants in respect to their degree of freedom, they would be technically far apart, but practically in the same category of unfree labor. As several recent studies have suggested, the degree of indirect control that landowners exercised over their workers in the southern Italian *latifondi* through particular forms of usurious contract was enormous and obliged peasants to be tied to their masters even long after serfdom had formally been abolished. Neither African American slaves nor southern Italian peasants had control over their lives and, even though slaves had no options, the peasants’ options were nonetheless very limited and certainly not wide enough for us to consider them “free”. 52

It is appropriate to describe both southern Italian and American Southern societies in the eighteenth century as “patriarchal”, since social and economic power was concentrated in the hands of male planters and aristocrats, who were both heads of their families and at the head of the social system as a whole. 53 Patriarchal
societies were “a world where hierarchy was as natural to the political order as it was to the family itself, where the distinction between family and society was blurred to the point of irrelevance ... Obedience to the father became the paradigm for obedience to all authority.” 54 This description applies to all western society in the eighteenth century, but it fits particularly well the southern U.S. and southern Italy, because in both places the tradition of deference toward a higher authority was particularly strong and embedded in the minds of the people. Deference, in fact, characterized the relationship of the individual towards all kinds of authority in society and especially the relationship of subjected children toward their father within the family. Therefore, it is particularly important to consider the way patriarchy worked in both souths, first and foremost within the walls of the aristocratic household.

Mid-eighteenth century American planters enjoyed unchallenged authority over an extended family, which often included uncles and nephews together with wives and children. Power relationships within the household were such that order, rather than emotional attachment, was considered as the most important feature of a perfect union. Just as wives could not challenge the authority of their husbands within the family, children could not object to their father’s decision over their marriages. 55 Almost invariably, planters’ marital choices were concerned with the acquisition of property and social status through their children. However, often the issue at stake was the freedom of choice: even if, for example, their daughters chose the most convenient party, planters could not accept in principle a diminishment of their authority. Typical is the case of William Byrd II, who opposed his daughter Evelyn’s decision to marry a baronet by telling her about “the sacred duty you owe a parent” and “the blessing you ought to expect upon the performance of it”. 56 There was,

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54 Oakes, Slavery and Freedom, 59.
56 William Byrd II to Evelyn Byrd, July 20, 1723, in M. Tinling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776. Vol. I (Charlottesville: University of
actually, more than this: in a society in which women’s lives were thoroughly dependent upon what men decided, a marriage built on a woman’s decision would have been regarded as subversive and highly dishonorable.

In fact, a system of values at the center of which stood the opposition Honor/Shame informed social and family life and dictated the way in which relationships between men and women were handled in both private and public. The idea of honor formed the core of the patriarchal ideology of male domination, since the honor of a household strictly depended on the sexual purity of its female members. Patriarchal values demanded that the planter’s wife and his daughters follow extremely strict community codes of sexual morality, or else bear the responsibility for the shame and disgrace falling upon the planter and his family. In the words of historian Brenda Stevenson, “honor, patriarchal rights, and female sexual purity and exclusivity were all weighty topics that southern men and women wrestled with for most of their lives.” 57 What Evelyn’s case really shows is William Byrd II’s preoccupation to regulate his daughter’s sexual life according to strict patriarchal principles, so as not to let any possibility of her bringing disgrace and shame upon the family. In other words, by choosing his daughter’s partner and future husband, the planter could be reasonably sure that no dishonorable act had been committed in his households. 58

Honor, intended as personal esteem, was also inextricably linked with patriarchy because “the married state and fatherhood, regardless of one’s social place, offered ... prestige”. 59 In eighteenth-century Virginia and South Carolina, where memories of the high mortality rates of the first settlers were still fresh, to be married and to have enough land to support a big family meant to enjoy a particular kind of social status which few could afford. Preeminent planters descended from generations of

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59 Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 66.
landowners who had built their fortunes on the acquisition of property and influence through careful and judicious marriage policy. In time, they had learned to regard their sons as the carriers of the family fortunes and their daughters as a means of building a permanent structure of alliances and prestige around the name of the family. The honor of the family name, therefore, was handed over from generation to generation through the right marital choice. Consequently, it was up to the patriarch-head of the family, rather than to his daughters, to make a crucial decision, from which he and his sons, rather than her, would benefit in the long run.

Outside the family walls, honor was linked first and foremost with race, or the fact of having a white skin. Honor and patriarchy were intertwined together in a system which provided the planters with a moral justification for the racial exploitation of their black slaves. Honor was related to freedom, and freedom was an almost exclusive prerogative of the white race. The honor of a patriarch depended on the degree of his importance in the society, which in turn depended on the number of black slaves who were forced to work for him. No one captured the ideal of the eighteenth-century Chesapeake planter better than William Byrd II, who likened himself to Biblical figures: “like one of the Patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every soart of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of Independence on every one but Providence.”

Racial slavery was inherent in the order of things in the eighteenth century patriarchal system. The harmony of the social order depended on the hierarchy of its elements from the top to the bottom: at the bottom stood the slaves, who did their duty in society by respecting the authority of their master. The master, therefore had free hand to exploit them in the harshest way. On the great slave based tobacco and

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60 In Virginia and in the rest of the Southern colonies, Primogeniture and Entail were law until after the American Revolution.
61 Particularly significant, in this respect, is the case of planters’ widows in colonial South Carolina. In analyzing their attitudes towards business and gender relations, Cara Anzilotti concludes that “fundamentally conservative themselves, these women, though capable managers, envisioned a traditional, male-centered society in the lowcountry and perpetuated it by standing in for the patriarchs and by preserving, and perhaps even improving, their families’ holdings, which they then passed along to succeeding generations.” See C. Anzilotti, “Autonomy and the Female Planter in Colonial South Carolina”, Journal of Southern History 63:2 (1997), 268.
62 Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 68.
63 Quoted in Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 39-40.
rice plantations, conditions were particularly harsh, since attempts to maximize the profit often led planters and their overseers to overwork the slaves and to punish them frequently. In fact, many planters’ diaries are filled with accounts of beatings and mutilations, although the latter had become less common by the second half of the eighteenth century.

However, planters typically liked to think about themselves as benevolent patriarchs, who looked upon “their people” and who cared about the life, health, and family relations of their slaves administering punishments only in the right measure. Even so, Peter Kolchin notes, “most benevolent masters resorted to the whip ... and behind all the talk of love and protection lurked the master’s power to compel obedience.” 64 Ultimately, the planters’ main goal was profit, and this was the reason why exploitation went hand in hand with care of the laborers. In the words of Daniel Littlelfield, “the patriarchal spirit ... though a concomitant, and not a determinant of economic management, nevertheless, had some humanizing aspects.”65

A striking example of these conflicting attitudes was Henry Laurens, the owner of extensive plantations in coastal South Carolina and Georgia and of over three hundred slaves. On one hand, it was clear that Laurens embodied the characteristics of the profit seeking planter; a contemporary described him in 1769 as “skilled in the rate of exchange ... and in the price of commodities” 66, leaving no doubt to the extent of his abilities as businessman. However, we know from Laurens’ private documents that he saw himself as an “absolute Monarch”, ruling over his subjects on the plantation. Taking the patriarchal metaphor of the king as “the common father of all those that are under his authority” and transferring it to his little world, Laurens envisioned each plantation as a little kingdom and a microcosm of the social order inherent in the patriarchal system. In his kingdom, he dispensed gifts – such as food or clothing -- or punishments – such as the threat of sale – at will; it all depended on the obedience and subservience of the slaves, whom he called the “poor Creatures

64 Kolchin, American Slavery, 60.
who look up to their Master as their Father, their Guardian, and Protector." 67

Laurens made clear that he was the unchallenged authority on the plantation by often punishing slaves guilty of misbehavior. However, he also gave obedient slaves superior treatment, provided that they recognized him as their "Guardian and Protector" and they granted him the same deference that members of the lower classes showed members of the upper classes in the patriarchal system. 68

In regarding himself as a monarch ruling over his subjects and at the same time feeling a limited responsibility for their guidance, Laurens behaved similarly to some enlightened Italian noblemen, who considered themselves as absolute lords of their fiefs and at the same time cared in a limited way that injustices would not be done to obedient vassals. 69 However, much more often southern Italian noblemen followed the codified rules of a rigid patriarchal ethos which focused upon detachment and the perpetuation of the established social order within both the fiefdom and the family. In fact, from childhood, noblemen were taught the importance of obedience to the father/head of the household in all matters concerning proper aristocratic behavior, and especially with regard to the transmission of landed property and marriage. Therefore, the traditional view of southern Italian aristocratic families in the eighteenth century is one of a rigid patriarchal microcosm. While the noble title was shared by all the members of the family, land belonged only to the firstborn according to the institution of the fidecommissio which prevented the division of property in the passage from one generation to the next. Even more pressure than in the American case, then, was involved in the right marital choice, which was regarded almost exclusively as a kind of business with which the head of the family had to deal. 70

As in Virginia and South Carolina, the prestige of the family and the honor connected to its name passed together with the transmission of landed property through the right marriage strategy. Nobles looked for alliances that would

67 Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, 13 March 1773, quoted in Olwell, Masters, Slaves, and Subjects, 193.
68 For an extensive treatment of Laurens, see Olwell, Masters, Slaves, and Subjects, 183-219.
69 See the case of the already cited Federico Di Napoli, Prince of Resuttano, in Cancila, ed., Noi e il Padrone.
strengthen their social position; therefore, they almost invariably imposed upon their children a marriage either within their own clan or with a member of another particularly influential clan. An instructive case which tells a great deal about the way nobles used combined marriages is that of the Tocco of Montemiletto, who in two centuries succeeded in climbing from a peripheral position to one of enormous prestige within the southern Italian nobility by constantly marrying the male firstborn to women who belonged to the wealthiest aristocratic families of Naples. Between 1600 and 1800, members of the Tocco family married women belonging to the prestigious clans Cantelmo, Filangieri, Carafa, Pignatelli, Caracciolo, Cybo Malaspina. Looking at the genealogy of the Tocco, it seems clear that their marriage strategy did not privilege alliances with a particular noble clan, rather it sought to place the family at the center of a wide network of connections with the highest ranks of the Neapolitan nobility. Through this strategy, the Tocco acquired not only prestige, but also new lands to pass on to the subsequent generations. For example, the marriage between Leonardo Di Tocco and Camilla Cantelmo Stuart, in the first half of the eighteenth century, gave the Tocco the possession of the large feudal estate of Popoli, Pettorano, and Rocca Vallescura in Abruzzo, while the marriage between Ristanio di Tocco and Camilla Cybo Malaspina, half a century later, gave the family the fief of Aiello, in Principato Citra. The marriages of the Tocco with the Cantelmo Stuart and the Cybo Malaspina are enlightening for other reasons as well: both the Cantelmo and the Cybo were families on the verge of extinction, since they had no male firstborn; the patriarchs/heads of the clans could only hope to preserve the family patrimony by marrying their daughters to the sons of a rising family like the Tocco and by doing so striking an alliance with another powerful clan. Therefore, it is fair to say that, even though the pursuit of the right marriage strategy was usually extremely important for the survival of a noble family, it became absolutely crucial when women inherited the whole family patrimony.\footnote{For more detail on the marriage strategy of the Tocco, Princes of Montemiletto, see Del Vasto,\textit{ Baroni nel tempo}, 32-46.}

Women, however, were in a particularly difficult position, whether they inherited part of the family patrimony or not. Not only did fathers preside over and often dictate marital choice, but also it was commonly thought within the nobility that “the
honorable quality of a woman depend[ed] on the quality of her husband.” 72 Indeed, the whole life of a noble woman rested upon the qualities of her husband, since noble men had absolute authority over their wives.73 Within the noble household, therefore, relations were extremely cold and hierarchical: the characteristic way in which wives and children addressed the patriarch was through the use of the formal personal pronoun lei, thus contributing to maintain detachment and deference in the daily life of the family. 74

Unlike the Chesapeake and South Carolina, in Southern Italy honor was first and foremost associated with noble status and the noble way of life. Since there was no racial discrimination against the laboring class, honor was a matter which involved only the few titled families at the top of the social scale. To be regarded as part of the nobility, therefore, was essential in order to be considered worthy of honor and social esteem. However, by the middle of the eighteenth century social recognition was no longer sufficient to prove that somebody belonged to the nobility. The new Bourbon state asked for certified documents, so that it could be ascertained that recognized noble families actually had held possession of a fiefdom for the last 200 years.75

Honor, noble status, and possession of a fiefdom, therefore, were strictly linked, so that the patriarchs at the head of the recognized noble families were also the most honorable and most powerful individuals in society. The power and influence of a family was often measured in terms of the number of vassals under its feudal jurisdiction, in a way that reminds one of both the American South and contemporary Russia.76

72 C. De Rosa, Glossographia et scriptiones ad consuetudines neapolitanas [Naples, 1677], quoted in Visceglia, Il bisogno di eternità, 74.
73 An instructive case in this respect is that of the Valguarnera, whose entire patrimony went in the hands of the only daughter of the last inheritor of the title of Prince. In order to avoid dispersing the patrimony, the woman— who could not have a husband among the most titled families because of her dumbness— was forced to marry her uncle. See Morreale, Famiglie feudali nell’età moderna, 71-84.
Still in the eighteenth century, Southern Italian patriarchs held a number of privileges over their fiefs and, even if in most of the cases they left the management of their lands in the hands of administrators, their influence over their vassals was great. There was no question that, as in the American South, respect for authority was the base of the social order. Consequently, the residents of the università -- the towns and territories subject to feudal jurisdiction -- paid homage to the lord and performed different kinds of corvees for him. The exploitation of the peasantry on the large feudal estates was mainly a matter of fiscal oppression and usurious contracts, since laborers were only nominally free by Eastern European and American standards. 77

Like American planters, southern Italian patriarchs liked to imagine themselves as benevolent toward their subjects; they often built houses and a chapel, in which "a daily mass is celebrated, for the ease and devotion of the lord of this village and of his whole court." 78 Even so, the castle of the lord with the jail where he would incarcerate peasants who challenged his authority served as a permanent reminder to everybody of who was entitled to administer justice within the fiefdom. Indeed, a particularly enlightened Sicilian feudal lord -- Federico di Napoli, Prince of Resuttano -- went as far as issuing three books of instruction for the administrators of his fiefs in 1762. As he himself explained in what can be considered the best summary of the philosophy of eighteenth-century patriarchs, the purpose of these three works was both to ameliorate the conditions of his vassals and to guarantee "a good and correct administration of justice" against criminals within the fief. 79 Although not as concerned with profit as American planters, the behavior of southern Italian feudal lords was characterized by a similar contradiction in terms of taking care of and disciplining the labor force.

77 Particularly well studied, in this respect, is the Sicilian situation. In Sicily, feudal lords usually rented their lands to middlemen -- called gabellotti -- who were responsible for the exploitation of day laborers and tenants in the form of highly usurious contracts. See O. Cancila, Gabellotti e contadini in un comune rurale della Sicilia (secoli XVIII-XIX) (Caltanissetta-Rome: Sciascia, 1974) and O. Cancila, Baroni e popolo nella Sicilia del grano (Palermo: Palumbo, 1983). The role of the gabellotti, which is crucial in understanding labor relations on the wheat-grown latifondi, will be treated in detail later on.

78 Archivio Caracciolo di Brienza 43.3.1, fols. 2r-v., quoted in Astarita, The Continuity of Feudal Power, 122.

79 The three books deal with matters as diverse as renting lands, fixing prices of crops, and administering justice on the fiefs; see F. Di Napoli, "Libro Rosso di Resuttano", "Libro Verde di Resuttano", and "Libro Verde di Condro", in Cancila, ed., Noi e il Padrone, especially 7-12.
Between Reform and Revolution

The second half of the eighteenth century proved crucial in both the American South and the Mezzogiorno. A new restructuring of the world-economy led to a decline in the wheat and tobacco trades which had been at the origin of the fortunes of the old landed elites, while the spread of liberal thinking led to a questioning of the patriarchal systems on both sides of the Atlantic. The influence of the American and French revolutions further accelerated the process of internal change within the landed elites and of modernization of the two souths in both economic and social terms.

Regarding the world-economy as a whole, the turning point was the period between 1760 and 1815. In the words of Immanuel Wallerstein, “As England began to speed up the process of industrialization after 1760, there was one last attempt of those capitalist forces located in France to break the imminent British hegemony. This attempt was expressed first in the French Revolution’s replacement of the cadres of the regime and then in Napoleon’s continental blockade. But it failed.” 80 By the end of the Napoleonic wars, England, which was the only fully industrialized nation, remained the only power left in the core.

This new restructuring of the world-economy led to the decline of those products which were not related to British trade or not particularly important to British factories. In the American South, tobacco and rice ceased to be the most important commodities in the export balance. A combination of factors -- among which soil exhaustion, new technologies of production and growing demand from British textile mills -- had started a boom in cotton trade by the 1790s, but only by 1815 was the South wholly committed to cotton growing. 81 In southern Italy, the period between the second half of the eighteenth century and 1815 saw a general decline in the production and trade of wheat and a general rise in the trade of other crops such as olive oil, wine, and citrus. Southern Italian olive oil, in particular, went -- like American cotton -- to feed the British textile mills, so that “this became the specific

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way in which the preeminently agricultural economy of the Italian *Mezzogiorno* participated in the process of industrialization ... between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century."  

Both in the American and the Italian South, the single most important consequence of these changes was the rise of new classes of landed proprietors who made their fortunes with the production and trade of new valuable crops throughout the nineteenth century. These new classes were represented by cotton planters in the American South and by citrus, olive oil, and grapes cultivators — mainly of bourgeois origins — in the Italian South. Given their relatively recent rise to prominence in society, American planters and southern Italian bourgeois landowners shared a similar disdain for aristocratic values and a belief in the efficiency of production for more effective competition in the world-market. As such, they formed progressive and modernizing social forces that challenged the authority and power of the old aristocracies. By 1815, therefore, new and an old sections of the landed elites presided over the economies of both souths. Two different historical formations had created different visions of the world both in the public and private spheres: "nouveau riches" and old aristocracies stood in tense relationship and sometimes in opposition to one another.

The process of economic change and adjustment went along with the spread of new ideas related to the English and French enlightenment. Liberalism, in particular, was a threat to the Old Order on many different levels: it came to describe a particular set of values which placed individual rights at the highest priority. To put it crudely, liberalism was the belief in the individual rights of the private proprietor, of the citizen within the state, and of the wives and children within the family. As such, it was completely opposed to the patriarchal system and it was a menace that in the end caused its destruction.

Liberal ideas found their way to the two souths through local versions of the enlightenment. In the American South the enlightenment gave birth to a Baptist counterculture and to a general questioning of the idea of authority, while in the

62.
82 P. Bevilacqua, "Il Mezzogiorno nel mercato internazionale (secoli XVIII-XX)”, *Meridiana* 1 (1987), 27; olive oil was used as a lubricant in textile manufacture.
Italian South it was the enlightened monarch who was at the center of the cultural and social movement of reform. In both cases, enlightened ideas resulted in an attempt to make deep social reforms driven by humanitarian purposes: however, the attacks upon the institution of slavery in America and on feudal privileges in southern Italy were both bound to fail. 84

The ideas of social reform of the enlightenment, together with a growing sense of independence from the British felt by the American colonies, were at the origin of the American Revolution. Although many of the leaders of the movement were southern figures, like Jefferson and Washington, its outcome did not give way to a preeminence of the South over the North, but rather to a compromise between the two social systems: already at that time, in fact, there was an opposition between southern elites, determined to keep slavery, and northern elites, who wanted a uniform free republican state. The whole period from the beginning of the Revolution until 1789, when the final draft of the Constitution was prepared, can be seen as the formation of a state whose internal tensions were starting to appear. 85

The result of the compromise was a federal state whose centralized power continued to feed the feeling of mistrust of the southern states, which were jealous of their local autonomy. 86 Southern pride received a final blow with the passing of several gradual-emancipation acts by northern states between 1784 and 1804; the outcome was that, in the words of Peter Kolchin, already “by 1810 ... three quarters of all

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Northern blacks were free, and within a generation virtually all would be.”

The Revolution led to a transformation and adjustment of the patriarchal system, since slaveholders realized the internal contradictions of a society that prevented most individuals from being truly free. A general crisis of the slave economy and the closing of the Atlantic trade accelerated the rate of slave manumission until the cotton boom inaugurated a new period in the history of American slavery. Freedom, therefore, remained only as a permanent achievement of white citizens and of wives and children within the household. In fact, family relations became much more driven by affection than before. According to several historians, the patriarchal extended family started to be replaced almost everywhere by a new kind of nuclear egalitarian family, where all members had equal importance.

The ideas spread by the French Revolution reached southern Italy in 1799, when the French army overthrew Ferdinand IV, the king of Naples. For the first time in history a Neapolitan republic was set up with a compromise between the liberal part of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, but it lasted only for a short time. After a brief period of restoration of the monarchy, Napoleon conquered Naples again and created a new kingdom under Joseph Bonaparte and then Joachim Murat. A further compromise between enlightened liberal ideas and the conservative part of the elite in power was reached with the abolition of feudal privileges in 1806. According to the new laws, peasants completely ceased to be serfs and could purchase land that had been confiscated from the debt ridden nobles. However, few peasants really benefited from the situation, since in the end the majority of land fell into the hands

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87 Kolchin, American Slavery, 79.
89 Among the most important studies that have argued for the rise of the family based on affection, rather than deference, see Blake Smith, Inside the Great House, 25-55; J. Lewis, The Pursuit of Happiness, Family and Values in Jefferson’s Virginia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and J. T. Censer, North Carolina Planters and their Children, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984). For the opposite argument on continuity of social relations within the southern household before and after the Revolution, see E. Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 64-66.

In Sicily, where Ferdinand IV had managed to escape under the British protectorate, the liberal side of the nobility managed to obtain from him in 1812 a constitution that sanctioned the transformation of the fiefdoms into private property. The subsequent Restoration monarchy abolished the constitution, provoking the first manifestation of Sicilian nationalism. At the same time, the monarchy ratified the end of feudal privileges, favoring, as in the Neapolitan Kingdom, the acquisition of land by the new landed bourgeoisie.\footnote{For an overview of the period of British occupation in Sicily, see J. Rosselli, \textit{Lord William Bentinck and the British Occupation of Sicily, 1811-1814} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956). See also F. Renda, \textit{La Sicilia nel 1812} (Caltanissetta-Rome: Sciascia, 1962); G. Giarrizzo, “La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità d'Italia” in V. D'Alessandro and G. Giarrizzo, \textit{La Sicilia dal Vespri all'Unità d'Italia} (Turin: UTET, 1989), 557-668; Romeo, \textit{Il Risorgimento in Sicilia}, 132-144; and, on the consequences of the feudal reforms, O. Cancila, “Vicende della proprietà fondiaria in Sicilia dopo l'abolizione della feudalità” in F. Pillitteri, ed., \textit{Contributi per un bilancio del regno borbonico} (Palermo: Fondazione Culturale Lauro Chiazzese, 1990).}{91}

The spread of liberal ideas not only affected society through the reforms brought by the revolution and its consequences, but also through changes in the relations of deference especially within the household. Similarly to what took place in the American South, in fact, in the \textit{Mezzogiorno} there emerged a new kind of aristocratic nuclear family based on affection rather than authority. Letters of many children to their parents and wives to their husbands bear the proof of a substantial change in family relations. This is particularly evident in linguistic terms because of the shift in the use of the personal pronoun in the family correspondence: whereas before 1800 most aristocratic children used the formal pronoun \textit{lei} to address their parents, as did wives with their husbands, after 1800 both children and wives replaced the formal \textit{lei} with the informal \textit{tu} in addressing the male head of household. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the use of the informal pronoun \textit{tu} was widespread among southern Italian noble families.\footnote{This process is well described in Barbagli, \textit{Sotto lo stesso tetto}, 295-353.}{92}
As a whole, there is a striking similarity in the attempt to apply liberal ideas to change the inequalities of the societies in the two souths and in the ultimate compromises that the governments of the emerging nations made with the different parts of the elites in power in order to prevent the new institutions from collapsing. In both cases, the result was the creation of a relatively centralized state which local elites regarded with suspicion, and the continuation of many of the privileges enjoyed by new and old landowners over both land and men. Actually, as a result of the compromises, the societies that characterized the two souths after 1815 displayed greater inequality, since the landowning classes of both regions had grown in strength and numbers at the expense of landless peasants and slaves. At the same time, the two elites had started to develop distinctive national identities through the experiences of leading popular wars of liberation against foreign domination; few events were as significant as the war of 1812 in the American South and the war against the French in southern Italy in forming the national characters of American planters and southern Italian landowners.

Above all, patriarchs had reinforced their power both within the family and within the society through relatively minor compromises with liberal ideas. However, a new wave of liberalism was to become one of the major causes of collapse of the two souths within the next forty-five years. But before this happened, the elites experienced the effects of the tensions over particularly contentious issues — such as the rights of the individuals and rights to own property — between the established patriarchs and the newcomers; whilst patriarchs were still anchored at an eighteen-century idea of aristocratic autocracy, newcomers embraced bourgeois liberalism. Although animated by different causes in the *Mezzogiorno* and in the American South, in the long run these tensions proved fatal for both patriarchal systems.
Chapter Three
The Economic Bases of Political Nationalism in the Two Souths

This chapter analyses the role of the landed elites in the development of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno as agricultural exporting peripheral regions in the nineteenth-century world. In the mid-nineteenth century, the economies of the two areas were based primarily on the production of crops on two different, but related, types of landed estates, plantations and latifondi. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a series of transformations in the world-economy had changed the nature of the demand for raw materials produced on the landed estates, prompting structural changes in the composition of the landed elites. The ultimate result of these changes was the formation of new entrepreneurial-oriented classes of slaveowners in the American South and landowners in southern Italy.

The chapter starts with a detailed treatment of the agricultural economy of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the context of the global effects of the changes in the world-economy. The aim of the analysis is to show that plantations and latifondi underwent comparable processes of adjustment through the shifts to cotton production in the American South and to citrus, olive oil, and wine production in southern Italy. The cultivation of new cash-crops went hand in hand with the spread of ideas of modernization and rationality in management related to the new entrepreneurial oriented classes.

The chapter continues by arguing that landed entrepreneurs of both souths were committed to agricultural development. Supported by leading intellectuals, they constructed an ideology of economic nationalism centered on the primacy of agriculture; they opposed the idea of a more diversified economy, which included the expansion of industrialization, advocated by businessmen and progressive
economic reformers within the two elites. In both cases, the division between advocates of agriculture and advocates of a mixed economy was instrumental in preventing the formation of a unified ruling class and, at the same time, in preventing the transformation of economic nationalism into political nationalism.

Plantations, Latifondi, and Commercial Agriculture

From the perspective of the world-economy, plantations and latifondi were but two of several types of agricultural structures at the periphery of the world-system. Large agricultural enterprises employing unfree or just nominally free labour were widespread throughout southern and eastern Europe, Latin America, and the European colonies in Africa and Asia. By 1815, some of these enterprises had gone through several transformations in order to adapt to the changes in the world-economy, while others were relatively new.

The nineteenth century saw an unprecedented increase in the movement of commodities. The demand for raw materials generated by the industrial revolution transformed whole regions of the world in specialized production areas. In the process, the economic and social structures of these regions, centered around large landed estates, were either created anew or reinforced. The market's demand for crops such as wheat, cotton, rice, citrus, oil, rubber, coffee, sugar, changed the function of plantations, latifondi, haciendas, Ritterguter, and ciflik.

1 This process is described in E. R. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 310-322. Wolf is critical of Wallerstein's claim of the emergence of a world-system during the sixteenth century; he sees the period between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries as the one in which a capitalist mode of production related to European expansion and to the worldwide movement of commodities came into being.

Common to all peripheral societies was the centralization of production in large agricultural units, employing large labor forces and specializing in one or more of the crops listed above. While the primary economic function of the estates was the sale of particularly valuable cash-crops in the world-market, a significant part of the labor force often was directed toward the production of additional food crops for internal consumption and subsistence.

On those large landed estates that had originated from former feudal structures -- such as the southern Italian latifondi -- the production of cash crops for sale was less intensive than on the large landed estates which had originated from colonial commercial enterprises -- such as the plantations of the American South. Indeed, the fundamental difference between latifondi and plantations was that the former were more oriented toward internal consumption with a few areas of production for export, while the latter were centered around cash-crop production for sale with only a few areas left for internal consumption.

This basic difference stemmed from both historical and structural reasons. In the late Middle Ages, latifondi and plantations could be found side by side in the Mediterranean. Plantation agriculture involving slave labor was employed first by the Arabs and then developed by northern Italian merchants -- Venetian and Genoese -- in their sugar production in Cyprus and Sicily. At this time, when plantations were a localized phenomenon involving mainly indigenous laborers, latifondi were characterized by servile or semi-free agricultural labor. 3

What made plantation slavery a profitable business were the same economic forces that transformed the latifondi into agricultural enterprises and that produced a reversion to serfdom in eastern Europe. 4 Philip Curtin has identified the rise of the modern plantation complex in the same period -- the sixteenth century -- in which Wallerstein has seen the transformation of the European economy into a

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3 For a detailed overview of slavery in the Mediterranean in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries, see D. B. Davis, Slavery and Human Progress (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 52-56.
world-system. The opening of a world market transformed a number of large landed estates into agricultural enterprises producing goods for external consumers. Therefore, the origins of modern plantations and *latifondi* are both linked to a much larger global phenomenon.

Recent studies -- notably the ones by Robin Blackburn and Paul Gilroy -- have convincingly argued for a close relation between the transformation of plantation slavery into a capitalist enterprise in the Americas and the rise of the "modern" world. Some historians have gone as far as seeing the emergence and later improvement of a system based on slave labor and centered around production for the world-market as anticipating features that belong to industrial capitalism. This process was paralleled in much of southern and eastern Europe and in the Spanish American colonies by the transformation of large landed estates into agricultural enterprises. Much like slave labor systems, *latifondi* and *haciendas* went through a period of mixed labor economy, in which free and semi-free labor could be found side by side. They then evolved into free labor systems, when slavery proved to be insufficiently profitable. In North America, tobacco and rice plantations employing semifree labor developed into slave-based commercial enterprises; in the Mediterranean, sugar plantations based on slave labor died out and gave way to wheat and olive *latifondi* employing free labor.

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5 P. D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 46-57. Curtin calls the 'plantation complex' "an economic and political order centering on slave plantations in the New World tropics" (ix); he sees the creation of the modern sugar plantation in sixteenth-century Brazil as its immediate forerunner.


Through what Ira Berlin calls a “plantation revolution”, the colonies in mainland North America became “slave societies” where slavery stood at the center of the production of valuable crops for sale in the world market. A revolution with similar profound consequences occurred in southern Italy as well, when the “commercialization of the fief” transformed the latifondi into agricultural enterprises inserted in the world-economy, with free landless peasants providing the basis of economic production. However, while the slave based plantations of mainland North America were born as prototypes of commercial agriculture and were centered around the production for the world-market, the latifondi developed into agricultural enterprises only at the time of the rise of the world-economy. As a consequence, most of the lands included within the plantations were cultivated with one or more cash-crops, while only selected areas within the latifondi supported crops for other than internal consumption.

In the eighteenth century, most agricultural production in the southern colonies of mainland North America revolved around two crops: tobacco in Virginia and rice in coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Both tobacco and rice were grown by slaves in large plantations and sold in the world-market in extremely favorable economic conditions, since there was very little competition from other crop
producing regions of the world. Although the two crops were grown in very different ways, the "plantation revolution" brought about by their discovery had similar effects on the world around them. Both the zones of tobacco and rice production were characterized by a conspicuous presence of plantations centered around "Big Houses". Both areas bore the distinguishing mark of a complete transformation of the landscape, reflecting the differences in social standing between the planters and the agricultural workers, free and unfree. In the words of Ira Berlin, "the plantation's distinguishing mark was its peculiar social order, which conceded everything to the slaveowner and nothing to the slave. In theory, the planters' rule was complete. The Great House, nestled among manufactories, shops, barns, sheds, and various other outbuildings which were called, with a nice sense of the plantation's social hierarchy, dependencies, dominated the landscape, the physical and architectural embodiment of the planters' hegemony."

Several eighteenth and nineteenth century travelers wrote that tobacco required constant attention throughout the year and close supervision of the laborers during the operations of tending and harvesting the crop. Luigi Castiglioni, a late eighteenth-century Italian traveler noticed that in Virginia "the main, and almost only, item of trade is tobacco ... the cultivation of this plant calls for a great deal of care and employs a large number of slaves during most of the year". Travelers also noticed that in order to take advantage of the best soil for tobacco growing -- which were scattered across the land -- the actual units of agricultural production

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12 Regarding rice, the only other serious competitor in the world-market was northern Italy; its output, however, was relatively small compared to the plantations in coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Although it was initially grown both in some areas of Europe and in the "extended Caribbean", stretching from northeast Brazil to Maryland, by the early eighteenth century Virginia and Maryland had become the leading producers mainly because of the superior quality of the Chesapeake crop and of its lower prices. See Wallerstein, The Modern World-System, Vol. II, 160-170, 202-203.

13 Berlin, Many Thousands Gone, 97.

were relatively small and the workers were divided in small groups and supervised either by an overseer or by the planter himself. Visiting a Virginia tobacco planter in the 1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted reported that he “cultivated only the coarser and lower-priced sorts of tobacco, because the finer sorts required more painstaking and discretion than it was possible to make a large gang of negroes use” 15 Tobacco cultivation required constant attention and encouraged planters’ residence on the plantation; at the same time, the planters’ constant presence and supervision of small groups of slaves produced a close relation with the labor force. 16

However, tobacco cultivation caused soil depletion. The land could be worked for three consecutive years and then it had to rest for twenty. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, this dynamic had pushed planters to look for new land. Moreover, tobacco’s relatively low financial return and periodic fluctuations in market demand encouraged planters to experiment with diversification. Significant experiments in diversification had occurred before 1760; however, the mid-1760s crisis in Mediterranean wheat harvests and the subsequent rise in wheat prices was decisive in spreading wheat cultivation throughout the Chesapeake. Afterwards, according to Philip Morgan, “wheat became the principal market crop”. 17 In fact, the tobacco planter whom Frederick Law Olmsted met in the 1850s was “one of the few large planters of his vicinity [in the tide water region of Virginia] who still made the culture of tobacco their principal business”. 18 To be sure, some nineteenth-century planters tried to retain a mixed economy on their plantation,

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17 P. D. Morgan, Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 47. An interesting case-study is the Shenandoah Valley, where all the major planters shifted from tobacco to wheat production between the 1760s and the 1770s; see R. D. Mitchell, Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 160-188.
cultivating both tobacco and wheat. However, as time passed, they found it increasingly difficult to keep up with competition in the market and had to expand wheat production at the expense of tobacco. 19

In contrast to tobacco, rice plantations only required a large effort in terms of capital and supervision when they were initially set up. Complex agricultural techniques were needed in order to transform the lowcountry swamps of South Carolina into drained and separated square units irrigated by fresh water; the flow of water into these units then was controlled by flood gates which had to be built very carefully. Luigi Castiglioni wrote that there were two ways of cultivating rice in South Carolina: rice cultivated in “tide fields” required “marshes near the rivers at some distance from the sea”, while rice cultivated in “inland fields” required “large artificially dug ponds” with “rather strong dykes”. 20 However, once established, rice plantations did not require close supervision. Partly for this reason, and partly as a consequence of the unhealthiness of the swamplands during summer, rice planters in most cases were absentee landowners. Their overseers supervised large numbers of workers, who were required both because of the sheer size of the units of agricultural production and because the investment of capital in technological devices and machinery could be returned only by large scale enterprise. 21

Since rice only could be grown on large units, and since the best and most profitable land was in the hands of few planters, large numbers of slaves tended to

19 Typical is the case of William Bolling, who “set about a hundred thousand tobacco plants and seeded some nine hundred acres in wheat; but an advance in wheat price from ninety cents to $ 1.90 in the fall of 1828 caused him to add another hundred acres to this crop”; see U. B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), 236.

20 Castiglioni wrote one of the most detailed contemporary accounts of rice fields in eighteenth-century South Carolina; see Pace, ed., Luigi Castiglioni’s Viaggio, 167; see also D. C. Littlefield, Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 56-114; and J. M. Clifton, “The Rice Industry in Colonial America”, Agricultural History 55 (1981).

21 The classic work on rice cultivation techniques in coastal South Carolina is D. Doar, Rice and Rice Planting in the South Carolina Low Country (Charleston: Contributions to the Charleston Museum, no.8, 1936); see also L. C. Gray, A History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, Vol. 1 (Washington DC, 1933), 255-290; and H. C. Dethloff, A History of the American
reside and work on single plantations. Unlike slaves on tobacco plantations, rice slaves worked according to the “task system” in which they had to perform tasks -- usually sowing or cultivating/weeding from half to one acre of rice -- after which they had the balance of the time for themselves. A nineteenth-century periodical defined the task as the amount of work “daily required of each competent person ... in accordance with age and condition”. After he or she had completed the task, the laborer went “to raise vegetables in his own private garden-patch, or to look after eggs and poultry and pigs, for all of which the master will pay him the market price as to any other trader”.  

Rice did not exhaust the soil and had high returns. This meant that planters did not have to look for new lands and had little incentive for diversification. Rice planters had many more reasons to continue to experiment with rice production in order to make it more profitable. Robert Allston -- a leading nineteenth-century rice planter -- reviewed the experiments in rice-growing up to 1854 in these terms:

Rice ... was introduced in Carolina and America at once, towards the close of the seventeenth century ... and the low country of South Carolina since, has become the centre of the rice-growing region. The first seed was white, such as is grown in China and Guiana to this day, and such as may still be seen produced on the uplands and inlands of America. Some time before the Revolutionary war, the ‘gold seed’ was introduced, which owing to its superiority, soon entirely superseded the white. It is now the rice of commerce, and the only grain referred to herein, when rice is mentioned, without being distinguished by some peculiar name or characteristic.

The shift between ‘white seed’ and ‘gold seed’ outlined by Allston was a momentous one and one that was accompanied by several other important changes in the techniques of cultivation. By the end of the eighteenth century, most planters had shifted from “flow culture” to “water culture”, by which rice fields were kept flooded rather than flowed and drained in a cycle. 25 However, the most important breakthroughs were the developments of pounding mills and threshing mills for cleaning rice. The threshing mills, invented in 1830, threshed the crop mechanically, an operation that previously required much labor to accomplish. This greatly accelerated the process of preparing the product for actual sale on the market. 26

Corn and peas were grown for subsistence on rice plantations as on tobacco plantations. However, there never was a crop that took the place of rice for principal export production, even though indigo was fairly important in some localities. To be sure, rice prices remained fairly stable even after the eighteenth-century economic rise of the lowcountry, but rice production did not grow exponentially as did other staple productions, and by the early 1800s rice lost its central place in South Carolina’s economy, replaced by cotton. 27

Unlike American plantations, southern Italian latifondi exported wheat throughout Europe up until the end of the eighteenth century. Wheat cultivation


was inextricably linked with the landed aristocracy who owned the majority of the *latifondi*. Although these large agricultural enterprises produced wheat for export in the world-market, the actual relations of production and the growing techniques were often the same they had been for centuries. The aristocrats were absentee landlords who lived off the rent paid by tenants (*coloni*) at market prices; until the beginning of the nineteenth century laws protected the landlords, preventing the division of the estate, but at the same time excluding it from the market. On one hand, the law of primogeniture (*maggiorascato*) dictated that the first male born should have the whole landed property owned by a noble family. On the other hand, according to feudal law, noble families could transfer the land they owned from one generation to the following, but they could not sell it to anybody. 28

Wheat was particularly appropriate for absentee landownership of the *latifondi*, since its extensive, rather than intensive, agriculture did not require continuous care throughout the year: the labor force, mainly formed by landless peasants (*braccianti*), was required only during the sowing, cutting, and harvesting seasons.29 During these crucial times, overseers (*soprastanti*) controlled the workers with the help of guards (called *campieri* in Sicily) and then reported to the landlords’ agent (*amministratore*). The agent was the key factor in the administration of the *latifondo*. Although he often acted as an absentee landlord himself, he was in charge of a very complex hierarchical system of land-lease, at


29 The *braccianti* were the most exploited category of peasants on the *latifondo*: not only they were landless but also they were paid very poorly. They were usually recruited from the nearby towns on a daily basis according to the necessities of the agricultural season. See F. Mercurio, “Agricoltura senza casa. Il sistema del lavoro migrante nelle maremme e nel latifondo” in P. Bevilacqua, ed., *Storia dell’agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea. Vol. I: Spazi e Paesaggi* (Venice: Marsilio, 1989); and also A. Monti, *I braccianti* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).
the top of which were the rent-collectors (gabellotti), who managed tracts of the estate and gathered rents from tenants (coloni). During the eighteenth century, the gabellotti, who were recruited from the peasantry, became powerful and influential men in charge of maintaining law and order on the latifondo, supervising the workers and acting as rent-collectors, stewards, field-guards, and overseers. 30

The lands of the latifondo covered an enormous expanse compared to even the largest American plantations, mainly because aristocratic families pursued a policy of aggressive land acquisition over several centuries. This important distinction helps explain why diversification in agricultural production was one of the main features of the latifondo; extensively wheat-growing areas lay alongside bare tracts of land fit only for pasture and adjacent to areas of intensive cultivation of olives and grapes. Writing in a somewhat pessimistic mode about Sicilian latifondi in the second half of the nineteenth century, Sidney Sonnino noticed that they included those lands located on mountains, hills, at the bottom of valleys, or on the plains, which are grown with wheat alternated with natural pastures ... fruit trees and shrubs are shrunk in the areas nearest to the cities; the rest is bare fields, and the whole cultivable part is given to wheat culture and pastures. Almost all these lands are divided in latifondi which are former feudal estates ... There are frequently estates of 1000 or 2000 hectares, and even 6000 hectares or more; but the majority is around 500 to 1000 hectares. 31


Such large and variegated landed estates lacked the internal consistency of a plantation, even though they had at their center -- or rather in the best possible location -- the equivalent of a big house: the masseria. As in the case of a plantation’s “Big House”, the masseria was supposed to be the center of the administration and the permanent symbol of power of the landlord over the labor force. However, as time went on, it became the occasional residence of the amministratore on his visits to the estate or temporary home of some of the gabellotti.  

By the end of the eighteenth century, the rent system of the wheat-growing latifondi was in deep crisis. Competition from Russian and American wheat on the world-market had halted the expansion of southern Italian wheat production. Most of the wheat produced on the latifondi was diverted to the domestic market to feed the local population of the countryside and the growing city of Naples. The absentee aristocrats lived a luxurious life as rentiers in the cities accumulating enormous debts and, consequently, placing even more pressure on the tenants’ rents in order to repay debts. Meanwhile, the amministratori and especially the gabellotti had succeeded in gaining enormous amounts of power by acting as middlemen and exploiting the peasantry even more harshly than the landlords themselves. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Paolo Balsamo, a leading Sicilian agricultural reformer, addressed the problem of absentee ownership of the latifondi in a memo written to the Viceroy, the Prince of Caramanico: “Almost none of our great proprietors is also farmer ... This most honored occupation now

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exists only among few provincial nobles, the number of which is rapidly diminishing with notable harm of the agriculture and of the state.”

All these factors formed the background to the abolition of feudal rights, decreed by the Napoleonic government in 1808 in the continental South and by the Bourbon government in 1812 in Sicily. The law transformed the latifondi into marketable land, allowing proprietors to buy and sell their landed estates. Several aristocratic families lost most of their lands paying off the large debts they had accumulated over the course of several generations. Most important of all, the lands that were sold on the market fell largely into the hands of a new gentry rising from the ranks of the amministratori and gabellotti, who often had new ideas about land management and contributed in a major way to the transformation of some of the latifondi into capitalist enterprises. Several historians have seen the amministratori and the gabellotti as a rising class of landed entrepreneurs; since the eighteenth century, they had used the nobles’ authority to manage the landed estates so that they could profit from periods of rising market prices of agricultural products and accumulate wealth at the expense of both landlords and peasants. At the same time, they often introduced or oversaw the production of particularly valuable cash-crops, such as citrus, olive oil, and wine, making enormous profits from their sale. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the abolition of the feudal law, they acquired large amounts of former noble land and continued

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the production of the valuable cash-crops, acquiring more wealth and working their way up the social scale, often becoming part of the titled nobility. 35

By the first half of the nineteenth century, American plantations and Italian _latifondi_ had acquired features that made them very distinctive, but related, economic and labor systems at the periphery of the world-economy. Centuries of adaptation to changes in the world market had transformed them into highly sophisticated centers of agricultural production that tended to be characterized by economic self-sufficiency, precise organization of labor regimes and -- most important of all -- unusual concentrations of power in the hands of landowners.

According to Eric Wolf the plantation was a “capital-using unit employing a large labor force under close managerial supervision to produce a crop for sale” which performed several functions simultaneously: organizational control, processing, and storage. The necessity of closely combining these three functions, and the necessity of defining the space as a “unit of authority”, gave plantations a military-like quality, with the big house as a “commanding center, walled off from surrounding fields and workers’ barracks”. 36 However, as a system of management, plantations resembled factories because they were “eminently suited to respond massively to market opportunities”. 37 Robert Fogel has argued that the high productivity of the slave based plantations of the American South was due to efficiency in management of the labor force, especially in the gang-system.

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35 This process is at the heart of Marta Petrucewicz’s compelling study of the Barracco family estate in her _Latifundium: Moral Economy and Material Life in a Nineteenth-Century Periphery_ (Ann Arbor: University Press of Michigan, 1996); see also J. & P. Schneider, _Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily_ (New York: Academic Press, 1976). The behaviors and characteristics of the rising class of entrepreneurs in the nineteenth-century Mezzogiorno are at the center of one of the liveliest debates in recent Italian historiography; see especially, A. Banti, “Gli imprenditori meridionali: razionalità e contesto”, _Meridiana_ 6 (1989); and B. Salvemini, “Note sul concetto di Ottocento meridionale” in _L’innovazione precaria. Spazi, mercati e società nel Mezzogiorno tra Sette e Ottocento_ (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1995).


implemented on the cotton plantations. Other historians have pointed out that the planters' pursuit of self-sufficiency made plantations “highly diversified enterprises producing a wide range of goods and services for internal use despite their concentration on a single cash-crop, all the while increasing the variety of work slaves performed”.

In several ways, this brief description of some of the many features of a plantation resonates with what we know about the nineteenth-century latifondo. Piero Bevilacqua and other historians have described the latifondo as a large landed property characterized by a mixed regime in which mono-cultural economies centering around the cultivation of subsistence crops coexisted with pastoral economies and with the production of valuable cash-crops for the world market. Self-sufficiency was guaranteed by a “fully capitalist rationality” according to which a minimum investment in innovation was combined with an extreme economic flexibility of the whole agricultural enterprise in shifting the emphasis from one sector of production to another according to the changes in the world-economy. The labor force was formed mainly of braccianti, who moved from surrounding areas to the latifondi on a seasonal basis. Marta Petrusewicz has pointed out that although not characterized by the presence of a technically unfree working class, the latifondi shared with plantations and other types of large landed estates the centralization of production, the efficiency of labor management and the exploitation of a not fully proletarianized labor force. These characteristics

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38 Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, 72-80. See also, on the efficiency of time management and slave labor on the plantations, M. M. Smith, Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
42 See M. Petrusewicz, “Wage Earners, but not Proletarians: Wage Labor and Social Relations in
were the result of transformations which occurred in the world-economy as a whole at the beginning of the nineteenth century and which affected both the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno. At each periphery of the world-system, progressive landowners responded to the challenge brought by the readjustment of the world-economy, experimenting with new technologies and crop rotation and rationalizing and making the production process as much efficient as possible. Far from being simply part of a general interest of post-1815 Europe for modernization, this “entrepreneurial liveliness” was a prevalent tendency among nineteenth-century landed elites on a world-scale. \(^{43}\) It was strictly related to the rising at the peripheries of entrepreneurial classes who made their fortunes by taking advantage of the demand of the world-market for new agricultural products, such as citrus, olive oil, and wine in southern Italy, and cotton in the American South. \(^{44}\)

Several profound changes occurred in the nineteenth century in the two plantation areas of the American South that we have examined: the Chesapeake and South Carolina. We already have seen how tobacco culture exhausted the soil forcing Chesapeake planters from very early on to experiment with crop diversification. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this process had

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reached its final stage: the tobacco economy of Virginian plantations was in deep crisis and an increasing number of planters relied on wheat as an alternative. Wheat by no means prevented the soil from overexploitation, and it should have been accompanied by crop rotation, as several progressive agriculturists recommended. Eugene Genovese reports that “[Edmund] Ruffin used a fine six-field system, and a fellow Virginian, Colonel Tulley, rotated his wheat with clover and got excellent results” 45 Crop mixture and improved farming techniques were next in importance, and progressive Virginian planters like John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo were engaged heart and soul in a battle against the tyranny of tobacco monoculture. In his most influential pamphlet, Tobacco: The Bane of Virginia Husbandry (1860), Cocke asserted that the preoccupation with tobacco forced planters to import meat, corn and hay from the North, rather than producing them themselves. Tobacco exhausted the soil and absorbed labor; at the same time, it was extremely unhealthy. For Cocke, the solution was crop rotation, the development of agricultural techniques that would restore the soil, and careful livestock breeding. 46

Through diversification and an emphasis on wheat culture, many former Virginia tobacco planters were able to survive the economic crisis of the early nineteenth century and re-invent themselves as cash-crop producers in the world-economy. Planters established no less then thirty agricultural societies in Virginia between 1815-1860; each of them had its own journal with advice on progressive techniques of farming. The emphasis in all their pamphlets was on experimenting with crop rotation and crop mixture and adopting improved agricultural

techniques. However, Virginia planters soon discovered that the agricultural transformation of their plantations profoundly affected slavery as a whole. Unlike tobacco culture, wheat and other types of grain did not require a permanent labor force. Also the number of laborers needed was smaller, so that several masters found it more profitable to retain only a few specialized field-hands and hire out the rest of their slaves. Frederick Olmsted noticed that “many thousand slaves had been hired in Eastern Virginia during the time of my visit” and “the vast majority of slaves are employed in agricultural labor”. 49

The most far-reaching developments occurred in South Carolina, where the boom in cotton production completely transformed the economy of the old rice producing state and soon after expanded in the rest of the southeast. Although there had been successful attempts at producing and selling cotton for the world-market among upcountry settlers before the 1790s, after Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin in 1793, cotton production entered a long and rapid phase of expansion. Cotton transformed the upcountry farmers of South Carolina into planters in the making, a new kind of gentry distinct from the old rice aristocracy of the lowcountry. 50

According to William Freehling, “upland short-staple, green-seed ordinary cotton -- unlike lowcountry long staple, black-seed, luxury cotton, and unlike lowcountry rice -- was a crop with which the poor made their fortune. One could grow upcountry cotton on cheap land, without slaves, or, as an alternative, with

47 During the nineteenth century agricultural societies were established all over the South; the most influential periodical for progressive planters was undoubtedly New Orleans’ De Bow’s Review (1845-1860). This flood of progressive agricultural publications call to mind the passion for agricultural reform studied by Marta Petrusewicz in the European peripheries and in particular in the Mezzogiorno; see M. Petrusewicz, “Agromania: innovatori agrari nelle periferie dell’Ottocento” in P. Bevilacqua, ed., Storia dell’agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea, Vol. III: Mercati e Istituzioni (Venice: Marsilio, 1991).


49 Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom, 91. On the practice of hiring out slaves, which was particularly widespread in the Upper South during the antebellum period, see E. D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage, 1974), 390-392.

50 On the beginnings of cotton production in South Carolina, see J. E. Chaplin, “Creating a Cotton South in Georgia and South Carolina, 1760-1815”, Journal of Southern History 57 (1991), see also A. G. Smith, Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860
This new, self-made gentry was more interested in profit than in a refined life of luxury, and it organized its cotton plantations as capitalist enterprises centered around production for the world-market. Commenting upon the rise of the new cotton gentry, an anonymous southern lawyer wrote in Harper's Weekly:

The sudden acquisition of wealth in the cotton-growing region of the United States, in many instances by planters commencing with very limited means, is almost miraculous. Patient, industrious, frugal, and self-denying, nearly the entire amount of their cotton crops is devoted to the increase of their capital. The result is, in a few years, large estates, as if by magic, are accumulated.

Although there was some mixed economy, especially since corn was produced for the slaves' subsistence, most of the labor activity went into cotton growing. The market's demand for cotton grew exponentially during the nineteenth century; southern plantations furnished the cotton mills of both Old and New England. Cotton production epitomized the South's distinctive way of participating in the industrial revolution.


Cotton plantations were organized in a rather different way from both tobacco and rice plantations. Planters were resident throughout the year and closely supervised a labor force divided into large gangs. The labor pace was much more exhausting than under the task-system leaving little time for slaves to do other activities except for Sundays. The close master-slave relationship that characterized the cotton plantation, together with its full involvement in the capitalist world-economy made the problem of labor management absolutely crucial especially at times of fluctuation in the market’s demand for cotton. More than other planters, cotton planters tried to achieve total control of the labor force; however, in the process they were forced to come to terms with the slaves’ notions of their own rights. Slaves resisted the masters’ imposition of their will on them in a variety of ways and through a process of continuous bargaining they achieved partial acknowledgement of their needs. In Eugene Genovese’s thought, this process was at the heart of the paternalistic relationship between master and slaves, a relationship which implied mutual obligation and reciprocity. As he explained in Roll, Jordan, Roll, paternalism forced masters to implicitly recognize the humanity of their slaves and, at the same time, it gave slaves room to manipulate their condition in order to carve out some room for autonomous behavior.

The case of Thomas B. Chaplin, a cotton planter of St. Helena Island, off the coast of South Carolina, is a particularly illuminating example of the process of bargaining between master and slaves over work on the plantation. In several


cases, Chaplin’s field hands resisted his orders by faking a misunderstanding and do other tasks instead of the ones to which they had been assigned. In one particular occasion, after a serious drought and consequent shortage of cotton, Chaplin desperately needed his slaves to plant new cotton (supply), rather than having them waste time covering the dead plants with dirt (hauling). Although he had not given precise orders, the slaves understood exactly the urgency of the situation; however, they led him to believe that they had misunderstood the priorities of their tasks, due to a lack of communication. On May 31st, Chaplin wrote a few notes of disappointment in his plantation journal, “I have not been out to see what the hands are doing. Saw some hauling cotton ... My Negroes were hauling cotton when their own sense should tell them they ought to be supplying.”

Through a series of minor incidents like this one the slaves resisted their master’s efforts to completely regulate their life and pace of work and managed to implement autonomous decisions; the final result of this bargaining process was the master’s recognition of their needs as human beings. In the words of Theodore Rosengarten, “just as the planters was perpetually exercising some means of surveillance or control, either through his formal institutions or in mundane contact with his slaves, so the slaves, by the various ways of physically and mentally withdrawing from the field, were forever creating elbow room to rest, pray, plot, love, heal, or for no other reason than to remain human.”

As on American plantations, on southern Italian latifondi, the changes in the overall structure of the nineteenth century world-economy had momentous effects. We have seen how southern Italian wheat was no longer competitive on the world-market and how its production increasingly turned to an internal market. Other

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58 See T. Rosengarten, Tombee, 158. It is important to acknowledge that Chaplin’s slaves had more room for bargaining than slaves on upcountry cotton plantations because Sea Island cotton planters usually employed the “task system”, rather than the “gang system”; see T. Rosengarten, Tombee, 68-92.
agricultural products found their way to the external markets; according to Giovanni Montroni, “the progressive decline of the export of both silk and wheat shifted the attention of southern producers first on olive oil and then on citrus and wine.” In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Mezzogiorno exported large quantities of olive oil to England and France, citrus to both America and Europe, and wine to England.59

Olive oil, which was produced in several different regions, supplied wool and soap factories. In many ways, it was the Italian South’s contribution to the Industrial Revolution. The total volume of olive oil exported leapt from 19,119 tons in 1832 up to 34,899 tons in 1855.60 Citrus, which was grown in groves (giardini) along the coasts, was sold to long distance markets, especially the United States and England. The new steam ships that started to be manufactured in the 1830s increased the speed and decreased the cost of transport from one side of the Atlantic to the other. By 1839, more than 373,648 boxes of citrus were shipped from the harbor of Messina.61 Wine production was widespread throughout

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60 Source in Bevilacqua, Breve storia dell’Italia meridionale, 19. The region around Naples, and especially the province of Salerno in Principato Citra, was among the most important areas of production of olive oil. In 1832 alone, the total value of export of olive oil from Principato Citra was 312,500 ducats; although the olive oil served also Sicily and other regions of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a good deal of it went to supply the soap factories of Marseille, France. See P. Tino, Campania felice? Territorio e agricolture prima della grande trasformazione (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1997), 35-37; and G. Alberti, Potere e società locale nel Mezzogiorno dell’Ottocento (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1987), 100-110. Another, equally important area, was Terra di Bari in Apulia; see B. Salvemini, “I circuiti dello scambio: Terra di Bari nel primo Ottocento”, in L’innovazione precaria, 123-159.

61 S. Lupo, “Tra società locale e commercio a lunga distanza. La vicenda degli agrumi siciliani”, Meridiana I (1987), 82. The most important areas of citrus cultivation were on the lower tip of Calabria, in the region around Catania, and in the Conca d’Oro surrounding Palermo, in Sicily; here citrus production had started under the Arabs and had grown exponentially during the eighteenth century. Only in the nineteenth century did Sicilian oranges and lemons find their way to
southern Italy since ancient times, but in the nineteenth century it received a new impulse from the world market demand. In particular, in Sicily, the English merchants Woodhouse and Ingham had started producing a sweet wine called *Marsala* at the end of the eighteenth century. During the course of the nineteenth century, local entrepreneurs, the most important of whom was Vincenzo Florio, made the production of *Marsala* a regional industry appreciated all over Europe. By 1840, wine had become the most important agricultural product exported from Sicily, with a total value of 1,400,000 ducats. 62

At the same time, the drive towards abolition of feudal rights resulted in substantial accumulation of land by a new landed gentry. 63 This new gentry included recently ennobled middle-class landowners, whose fathers had been either *amministratori* or *gabellotti* for important aristocratic families. Unlike most nobles, they often directly managed their own estates and experimented with scientific agriculture and innovation. They strove to build a complex administration, which, like the Barracco estate studied by Marta Petrusewicz, had “a whole mosaic of tenancy forms, a multiple-crop system, industrial production, and a great variety of farming techniques ranging from the archaic to the most modern and sophisticated, as well as complex web of markets”. 64 Together with

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63 For an overview of the process of formation of the agrarian bourgeoisie (*galantuomini*), see Demarco, *Il crollo del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, 1-52.

64 Petrusewicz, *Latifundium*, 6. The case of the Barracco is exemplary, since they were originally a bourgeois family that rose to prominence through acquisition of land and marriage with the “highest nobility of the realm” in the first half of the nineteenth century; hence their “modern” view of the administration of the *latifondo* and their implementation of direct management on their landed estate.
wheat, which was the main crop grown for internal consumption, nineteenth
century latifondi produced either one or two or all of the three cash-crops
mentioned above for sale in the world-market. For example, in the Calabrian estate
of Agostino Serra, Duke of Gerace, some areas were rented to tenants to grow
wheat, some others to grow citrus, and some others to grow olives for oil. Reading
the documents of the estate’s administration, one cannot help but think that olive
oil was the most important item produced and exported from the Duke’s latifondo
throughout the 1830s and 1840s. In the first half of the nineteenth century, olive
oil was “the road by which Calabria was ... taken into the circuits of the national
and international markets”. 65

The capitalist rationality of latifondo management lay in the ability to
emphasize sectors of commercial agriculture for external sale or to retreat to
internal consumption according to the fluctuations in the world-market. 66 Rather
than applying pressure on the management of the labor force, which was free, the
owners of the latifondo (latifondisti) responded to the market’s demands by
creating a system of production that was highly flexible through its diversification.
Like the Duke of Gerace’s shift from wheat to olive oil production, the
entrepreneurial latifondisti were quick in producing those agricultural products
that the market needed when it required them. Products, such as citrus, olive oil,
and wine, enjoyed a boom in market demand throughout the nineteenth century,
and some of the latifondisti took advantage of it, focusing upon cash-crops without
abandoning wheat culture on their landed estates. 67

65 M. Giorgio, “Produzione e commercio dell’olio nell’azienda calabrese dei Serra di Gerace
(1836-1847)” in G. Monroni, ed., Agricoltura e commercio, 49. The landed estates of the Serra di
Gerace are among the best known case studies of agricultural enterprises in the nineteenth-century
Mezzogiorno; see A. Sinisi, “Le aziende calabresi dei principi Serra di Gerace nella prima metà del
XIX secolo” in A. Massafra, ed., Problemi di storia delle campagne meridionali nell’età moderna e
contemporanea (Bari: Dedalo, 1981); and G. Monroni, Gli uomini del re. La nobiltà napoletana
nell’Ottocento (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1996).

66 Maria Malatesta writes that the rationality of the Barracco’s management of their latifondo lay in
that family’s ability to keep it in “a kind of suspended equilibrium by protecting the agricultural
products from the market’s fluctuations, keeping at the same time the cost of production at a low
level”, Malatesta, Le aristocrazie terriere, 53.

67 On this important feature of the latifondo and the “dialectic between wheat and trees [commercial
crops]”, see Lupo, “I proprietari terrieri del Mezzogiorno” in P. Bevilacqua, ed., Storia
agricultural reformers understood that the strength of the *latifondo* lay in the diversification of crops and in the combining of extensive and intensive agriculture. They therefore advised proprietors to supplement wheat with other commercial crops. The *Annali Civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, a government-funded publication dedicated to the promotion of progress in the southern Italian kingdom, recommended:

The planting of trees never fails ... plantations are a capital that increases through the years and without expenses ... Olive trees will always be the symbol of our wealth ... I would [also] set up a vineyard with carefully selected tendrils to make better wine; because, if wine is not excellent, if it does not have a name on the market, it is a fruitless business ... Arts and manufactures now make great use of wine *spirit*, therefore distillation has become a very profitable industry. 68

Since the production of olive, citrus, and grapes implied the planting of trees, the technical term employed for these three crops was “tree cultivation” (*coltura arborea*), as opposed to cultivation of wheat (*coltura a grano*), which did not need trees to support it. 69 Most of the entrepreneurial *latifondisti* linked the possession of olive and citrus groves and vineyards to the very idea of agricultural progress itself because of the high value of “tree cultivation” on the market. Many recently ennobled and non-noble *latifondisti* – such as the Barracco and the Nunziante in Calabria, the Fortunato in Basilicata, the Turrisi Colonna and the Gravina in Sicily -- often owned, together with *latifondi*, landed estates that produced valuable cash-crops, or else they implemented “tree cultivation” on particular areas of their
In those areas of the *Mezzogiorno* were "tree cultivation" was prevalent, commercial agriculture and production for the external market were particularly strong; these factors help explain the extraordinary wealth displayed by increasing numbers of landowners on the coasts of Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, where olive and citrus groves and vineyards were widespread. A particularly impressive description of the irresistible advance of "tree cultivation" and commercial agriculture on the eastern and southwestern coasts of Sicily is the one by Sidney Sonnino; still in the 1870s, Sonnino noticed that in the regions dominated by "tree cultivation", the whole landscape and economy of the region were progressively transformed, since "every year there were new plantations, methods of cultivation were improved ... agriculture tended to make progress and strove to become intensive and improve the quality of its products". 71

Special types of land-lease (*contratti a miglioria*) bound the tenants of the commercial sectors of production to provide for the improvement of the lots they rented; the tenants – usually landless *braccianti* -- had to pay an annual rent and at the same time plant or take care of vineyards or olive groves. The land-lease lasted from ten to fifteen years, during which time the tenants were the beneficiaries of the fruits of the trees they had planted, usually with enormous effort; however, when the contract expired, they had to return the lot and the fruits to the landlord without any compensation. Often, this meant that the peasants had to leave the land they had stewarded for ten years just when the olive trees started to bear fruit and the vineyards started to produce at full scale. Augusto Placanica writes that "the needs of specialized cultivation pushed the landed proprietors to place the burden of innovation on the laborers." 72 However, unlike most types of land-lease, the *contratto a miglioria* gave the tenants some degree of control over the land they rented; therefore, in this sense, it was a compromise between the

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70 See Lupo, "I proprietari terrieri del *Mezzogiorno*", 105-118.
71 Sonnino, "I contadini in Sicilia", 78.
landlord’s need to improve the *latifondo* with profitable “tree cultivation” and the peasants’ increasing demand for land.\(^7\)

Although the areas of commercial agriculture were relatively small compared to areas of wheat production, “tree cultivation” needed especially intensive care, mainly because of the constant irrigation required. In the case of citrus groves, for example, the landlord supplied the land, the plants, and the water, while the tenants had to grow the citrus, guard the groves, and irrigate them constantly. Unlike the cases of olive and grapes, the *contratti a miglioria* for citrus groves could reach a duration of up to twenty years. Also, in the case of short-term contracts, the tenants could grow freely both vegetables and citrus; in the case of long-term contracts, the crop was shared between the tenants and the landlord with an increase in the landlord’s share with the passing of time. According to Salvatore Lupo, in the most productive groves the tenants’ share was fixed at a maximum of one eighth of the total crop; however, some landlords, especially the ones who belonged to the ennobled bourgeoisie, struck more equitable deals with the peasants working on their land. In particular, Lupo cites Sidney Sonnino, who thought that the contract in use on Baron Niccolò Turrisi’s citrus groves, according to which the peasants’ share was one fourth of the crop, was particularly progressive. Niccolò Turrisi was the son of a former *gabellotto*, an advocate of agricultural modernization and the owner of the model farm of Bonvicino, where he implemented his ideas about rationalization of production; it scarcely comes as a surprise that he was praised by his contemporaries for his attitude of compromise with the needs of the laborers, an attitude which reminds one of the kind of bargaining process between master and slaves on Thomas Chaplin’s cotton plantation.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) For a synthesis of the characteristics of the *contratto a miglioria*, see Bevilacqua, *Breve storia dell’Italia meridionale*, 166. For a more detailed overview of the nineteenth-century *contratto a miglioria* and its consequences for the peasants, see Placanica, “Il mondo agricolo meridionale”, 301-304. For a critical perspective on a specific case-study of a kind of *contratto a miglioria* in use in Terra di Bari, see Demarco, *Il crollo del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, 126.

\(^7\) On the *contratti a miglioria* related to citrus growing, see Lupo, *Il giardino degli aranci*, 88-89. See also Sonnino, “I contadini in Sicilia”, 70-95. More will follow about Niccolò Turrisi on Chapter Five.
The special nature of the valuable crops and of the work related to them led the landlord/master to have particular expectations from his tenants/laborers. During the whole period of the contract’s duration, the tenants were expected to take particular care of the trees they had planted, both because it was in their interest to take advantage of the land-lease as much as they could, and because they were liable of being fined if they did not provide the landlord with the services he required from them. Due to these particular characteristics, which emphasized the spirit of collaboration between landlords and tenants, the contratti a miglioria were held as an equitable compromise between the needs of landless peasants and landowners already in the nineteenth century. Their “progressive nature” lay in the fact that they were based on the idea of reciprocity as it was embodied in reciprocal agreements stipulating what each party needed and what each could provide in the transaction. In this sense, the contratti a miglioria were emblematic of the new gentry’s and ennobled bourgeoisie’s attitude toward the peasants working on their landed estates, an attitude akin to the paternalism of American planters toward their slaves. Although exploited, workers in the commercial sectors of agriculture of the latifondo had a greater chance of establishing boundaries of agreement within which to operate, due to the landowners’ commitment to rationalization of production and to the special nature of the contratti a miglioria. In this sense, their situation was comparable to the one of slaves on plantations owned by cotton planters such as Thomas Chaplin, where the master’s interest in marketing the product and his attempts to impose his own pace of work clashed with the slaves’ affirmation of their own rights.  

The common features of southern Italian latifondi and American plantations -- and of several other types of large landed estates up until the mid-nineteenth

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century—can be summarized as follows: a) a mixed economy, either more oriented toward sale in the world-market or toward internal consumption; and, b) the ability to respond to fluctuations in the market's demand either by changing the shape of labor management or by shifting emphasis to different sectors of production. As a general feature, nineteenth-century plantations and latifondi had a hybrid character of both capitalist and non-capitalist enterprises. The ability to respond to market fluctuations and the production of selected cash-crops for sale in the world-market made plantations and latifondi a capitalist business, but the mixed economy—"a mixture of subsistence and market-oriented production"—and the non-existence of a labor market in the capitalist sense made them more similar to "feudal" structures. The non-existence of a capitalist labor market in the American South was due to both the enslavement of the labor force and the particular relations that had developed between masters and slaves, while in the Italian South it depended upon the persistent importance of distinctive authority relations between landowners and peasants. In both cases, it was the particular relation between masters and laborers that emphasized the non-capitalist character of the latifondi and plantations and at the same time gave laborers a resource for action toward the improvement of their conditions. Especially on those plantations and latifondi owned by new self-made planters and latifondisti, relations between masters and laborers tended to move in the direction of definition of boundaries of agreement, as the examples of Thomas Chaplin and Niccolò Turrisi show. On one hand, this happened because of the masters' necessity of maintaining a production regime that responded to market demand; on the other hand, it was a product of the particular ideological outlook of the new entrepreneurs, an outlook which emphasized paternalism and reciprocity in the master-laborers relationship.  

76 Clearly the reference for the American South is Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, while for the Italian South it is still M. Petresewicz, Latifundium, but also “The Demise of Latifondismo”, in: R. Lumley and J. Morris, eds., The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997).
Commercial Dependency and Industrial Weakness

Nineteenth-century agricultural entrepreneurs in the two souths can be best described as ‘dependence elites’. According to Jane and Peter Schneider and Edward Hansen, ‘dependence elites’ are one of the two basic elite types -- the other being ‘development elites’ -- associated with regional processes of modernization. While ‘development elites’ tend to “stress the role of the state in economic planning” and also “seek to mobilize national resources and people for national aims”, ‘dependence elites’ tend to not take initiatives on a national scale, to “place more emphasis on markets than on the state”, and to consume the capital accumulated into international trade without making further investments. 77

‘Dependence elites’ can flourish only in situations where the state is inherently weak and where regional upper classes can take advantage of their economic power to fill the gap left by institutions at the political level. Such situations were typical of the regions at the periphery of the world-economy in the nineteenth century, such as the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno. While in the American South, the state was weak because of the limited power of the federal government up to the Civil War, in the Italian Mezzogiorno the state was weak because of the feeble support for the kind of absolute monarchy that the Bourbon kings wanted to maintain. Moreover, in both souths, two very powerful elites, that based their fortunes on the sale of commercial crops in the world-market, had emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century: the cotton planters and the landed bourgeoisie engaged in olive oil, citrus, and wine production.

The kind of entrepreneurship that these two groups represented was paradigmatic: both their fortunes were closely linked to fluctuations in the demand for the commercial crops that they grew. As ‘dependence elites’, they relied on the world-market for their own economic power. However, they were unable to

promote projects of autonomous development that would release their regions from dependency on the economic needs of more industrialized regions. 78

Economic reformers in both souths had understood the danger of a situation of dependency from as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a consequence, throughout the period 1815-1860, the central problem which they sought to address, and help resolve, was the development of a strong and autonomous regional economy. Reformers in both regions stressed economic liberalism, scientific agriculture, and the promotion of manufacturing. Especially in the 1820s and 1830s, during a particularly favorable period for the economy of both souths, agricultural societies met regularly, schools which taught agricultural techniques were founded, specialized agricultural journals were published, and leading agricultural spokesmen traveled around the country in order to write reports on the conditions and the needs of different regions.

In the American South, reformers such as George Tucker, Jacob Cardozo, J. B. De Bow, and Louisa McCord advocated crop diversification and a free-trade policy inspired by classical political economy. 79 Among the leading economic journals were Edmund Ruffin's Farmer Register and John Skinner's American Farmer in Virginia, and John D. Legaré's Southern Agriculturalist in South Carolina. As previously discussed, experiments in crop diversification in Virginia had begun somewhat earlier, because of tobacco induced soil exhaustion. A real


79 Genovese contends that actually "the leaders of southern economic thought ... were trying to use the economic science of the age to justify claims to the moral and practical superiority of slavery as a social system"; see E. D. Genovese, The Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 55. See also, for an overview of antebellum southern political economy, A. Kaufman, Capitalism, Slavery, and Republican Values: Antebellum Political Economists, 1819-1848 (Austin: University
breakthrough came when Ruffin discovered that marl could restore the fertility of tobacco plantations; he reported the results in the American Farmer in 1821, and then went on propagandizing them in his own periodical, the Farmer Register, from 1833. The official journal of South Carolina's State Agricultural Society, The Southern Agriculturalist, started its publication in 1828; its director, John D. Legaré, was particularly keen in stressing the importance of crop diversification and planting profitability, themes that the planters of the region needed to attend to. Legaré was convinced that his journal could be an effective medium of communication for agricultural knowledge, and throughout its eighteen years of publication he managed to maintain a balance between scientific experimentation and agricultural education.

As in the American South, the most important economists of the Italian South, Francesco Fuoco, Antonio Scialoja, and Francesco Ferrara relied on classical economists, such as Smith and Ricardo, and supported a free-trade policy. Leading economic journals of the time included Ignazio Rozzi's Il Gran Sasso d'Italia, Luigi Maria Greco's Annali della Calabria Citeriore, and Ferdinando Malvica's Effemeridi Scientifiche e letterarie per la Sicilia. Ignazio Rozzi was an important agronomist and a secretary of the Economic Society of Abruzzo Ulteriore, who in 1838 founded Il Gran Sasso d'Italia; his aim was to promote the economic development of his region through scientific agriculture. Luigi Maria Greco was a journalist and historian who led the Economic Society of Calabria Citra; in 1840 he started publishing the Annali della Calabria Citeriore which was a journal

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80 See, among the most important articles published by Ruffin on his path breaking experiments on marling in Prince George County, Virginia, "First Views which Led to Marling in Prince George County", Farmer's Register 7 (1839), and "Observations on the Earliest Marled District of Prince George County", Farmer's Register 8 (1840). On Ruffin as agricultural reformer, see D. F. Allmendinger, Ruffin: Family and Reform in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 23-56; see also W. M. Mathew, “Agricultural Entrepreneurship and the Ruffin Reforms in the Old South, 1820-1860”, Business History 27 (1985); and A. Craven, Edmund Ruffin, Southerner: A Study in Secession (New York: Appleton and Co., 1932).

primarily, but not solely, concerned with agricultural development. Malvica’s *Effemeridi*, a Sicilian review, started out in 1834 as the official publication of the Royal Institute for Improvement (Reale Istituto di Incoraggiamento). The range of interests this journal dealt with was wide; it considered both literary and scientific matters, with special attention to economic progress which, according to Malvica, was related to scientific agriculture and to the promotion of industry helped by the state.

There is no question that the leading economic publications in the two souths were De Bow’s Review and the *Annali Civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie*. They had in common a national circulation and a stress on the need for a healthy economy through improvements in agriculture and manufacturing. However, while *De Bow’s Review* was a wholly private enterprise, the *Annali Civili* was sponsored by the Bourbon Kingdom. James De Bow, a South Carolinian, started publishing the Review in 1846 in New Orleans and, by 1850, he had more than 5,000 subscribers. De Bow maintained that the South needed to complement agriculture with industry in order to stop its economic dependency on the North. To promote this project, he founded the Southern Commercial Conventions, which gathered planters and industrialists from all over the South and met annually from 1852 to 1859. Raffaele Liberatore was the creator of the *Annali Civili* which commenced publication in 1833. With the help of famous economists and high civil servants, like Afan De Rivera, he created a periodical entirely dedicated to

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progress and reform in agriculture and manufacturing, which he considered equally important to economic development. For this reason, by 1839, the Annali Civili featured a section on the “Proceedings of the Economic Societies of the Provinces of the Kingdom”, in which local administrators reported on economic progress of their regions. 85

A particularly important characteristic that both De Bow’s Review and the Annali Civili shared was a distinctive stress on the equal importance of industry and agriculture. In the predominantly agricultural worlds of the two souths, this emphasis often fell on deaf ears. Both southern planters and southern Italian possidenti (landholders) were usually reluctant to engage in manufacturing, and most industries were run or owned by non southerners in both countries. Certainly, there were important differences between the two cases -- among them the fact that by 1860 the American South could boast more than 10,000 miles of railroads against the few kilometers that ran in the Mezzogiorno. As a whole however, both souths lagged behind the more industrialized regions of the world. 86

The most important industries in the American South included forges and ironworks, centered in Virginia and Tennessee, tobacco processing in Virginia and North Carolina, and textile mills in North and South Carolina, and Georgia. Although by 1860 60 per cent of all American smoking tobacco came from the South and one fifth of the national output for textile mills came from the slave states, southern industries could never rival their counterparts in Pennsylvania and New England. Only a handful of southern industrialists were as famous as the

most renowned planters of their own time. Among them there was Joseph Reid Anderson, who in 1848 became president of the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond and employed 800 workers, most of whom were slaves, both skilled and unskilled.87

However, the most important figure was William Gregg, a Virginian who visited New England and finally settled in South Carolina in 1845. In the same year he published Essays on Domestic Industry, in which he maintained that poor whites, rather than slaves, should become factory workers. He was especially attracted to cotton mills and built his own in Graniteville, near Augusta, Georgia, in 1846. His idea was to recreate a New England mill village, which he largely accomplished, employing 300 laborers who slept and worked there under strict rules.88

Although his example was not emulated, Gregg became the leading spokesman for the need for a southern industry, writing several articles on the subject in De Bow’s Review. The basic problem, according to Gregg, was that most planters did not value investment in industry as much as investment in agriculture; consequently, there was little or no interest from the states to promote manufacturing. Those entrepreneurs that thought differently, like Gregg, discovered that the South lacked basic infrastructure and legislation to protect industrial production. At the end of a long article on the failure of the South to provide patronage for its own industries, Gregg wrote:

In all civilized nations, the political power has yielded to the sceptre of commerce; and no nation in modern times has become commercial without the aid of manufactures; and so surely, as we follow up the system which is advocated by many, as the true policy of the South, of remaining an

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exclusively agricultural people, neglecting all other industrial occupations ... surely we will become vassals of some power ... To be independent we must be our own merchants ... Let us encourage the extension of manufactures, and by all means encourage and give our patronage to every article the product of Southern domestic industry. 89

In Gregg’s thought, economic power and political power were strictly related; it was obvious to him that the politically strong nations were also those that had a strong economy. A strong economy was one in which industry and agriculture coexisted and the interests of both collaborated to make a nation self-sufficient. No one more than Gregg was aware of the disastrous consequences of the South’s weakness in industrialization. The southern ruling classes and their political expressions, the state governments, continued to rely on an almost exclusively agricultural economy while, according to the reformers, they also should have encouraged the spread of manufacture and protected the products of the local industry. Only if industry started to have the same importance as agriculture in the mind of southern entrepreneurs, could the South have a self-sufficient economy and free itself from the “degrading shackles of commercial dependency” on northern and British industrial products.

The American South’s weakness in industrialization was mirrored by the absence of major industrial centers in the Italian South. However, in the Mezzogiorno dependency upon more industrialized regions of the world took a more visible form than in the American South, since several of the few industries that existed were owned and run by Swiss, German, English, and French entrepreneurs.

Important industries in the Italian Mezzogiorno included ironworks, centered at Pietrarsa and Capodimonte, both in Campania. The former started in 1840, sponsored by the government; it employed more than 800 workers and mainly produced implements for the royal navy. The latter was a private enterprise started

in 1833 by Gregorio Macry, who was a native southerner; by 1850 Macry & Henry had 550 workers. Other important industries were the wool industry in the Liri valley in Campania, and the silk industry in Campania, Abruzzo, and Calabria. The wool producing “industrial district” of the Liri valley was the best example of successful enterprise carried out by southern entrepreneurs. In 1860 the seven factories built by the Simoncelli, Muzio, Cino, and Ciccodicola provided employment for 2,800 workers and produced 6,000 quintals of wool altogether.  

The cotton industry had a special place in the manufacturing of the Southern Kingdom, both because of its size and because of its ties with foreign capital. Giovanni Giacomo Egg, a Swiss entrepreneur, erected the first cotton loom at Caserta, in Campania, in 1812; by 1843 his factory had 500 looms and 1,300 workers, producing 4,000 quintals of cotton a year. Davide Vonwiller, another Swiss entrepreneur, launched his first cotton mill near Salerno, in Campania, in 1812; by 1838 his 600 workers produced 8,000 quintals of cotton a year. Altogether, cotton manufacturing counted more than 5,000 workers located in different areas of Campania and was entirely managed by ten families of Swiss entrepreneurs.  

The fact that one of the Mezzogiorno’s major industries was in the hands of foreign entrepreneurs underscores the problem of commercial dependency in the Italian South. With very few native entrepreneurs in the industrial sector, there was little capital invested in industry compared to agriculture; most landed proprietors did not consider investing in manufacturing at the same level as investing in land.  

For this reason, the Annali Civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie, a progressive publication issued by reformists close to the king, called for the creation of a strong manufacturing sector initiated and managed by southerners under the patronage of the government:

90 Source in Demarco, Il crollo del Regno delle Due Sicilie, 54-100. See also L. De Rosa, Iniziativa e capitale straniero nell’industria metalmeccanica del Mezzogiorno, 1840-1904 (Naples: Giannini, 1968); and S. De Majo, L’industria protetta. Lanifici e cotonifici in Campania nell’Ottocento (Naples: Athena, 1989).
There is no need to clarify what is today manifestly evident to everybody: how important is industry and how much richness and prosperity it brings in the present conditions of civilization ... There is no hope of prosperity for the people, when there is no industry together with trade and agriculture ... This southern part of Italy ... had so far looked with pain to the fact that she lagged behind in these studies ... now she will make up for the lost advantage, now that she has started moving and that she is being helped by the powerful hand of the Government. 93

The issues touched upon by agricultural reformers in the Annali Civili are remarkably similar to the ones that industrialist William Gregg wrote about in his famous article in De Bow's Review. Enlightened economists of both souths considered industry and agriculture as the bases of the strength and independence of every nation; therefore, the wealth and prosperity of the people depended on a balanced economy which gave equal importance to both. Also, in both cases, reformers considered the state responsible for promoting and protecting indigenous manufactures and improving agricultural education; they thought that only by doing this could the government commit itself to a long-term program of economic development that would guarantee tangible results. 94

Remarkably, in both souths, the reformers’ cry against commercial dependency of the two regions assumed increasingly political tones. In both cases, the solution that industrialists and commercial entrepreneurs proposed was a more decisive action from the state in matters of economic policy. This could only occur with the creation of a strong governmental institution that enjoyed widespread political support. In the American South, the state legislatures were too weak to impose their will over the areas of the country dominated by planters’ interests; in the

92 These factors are analyzed in detail in Davis, Società e imprenditori nel regno borbonico.
94 The links between economic progress and governmental support for education in the American South are particularly well-exposed in E. Herriott, “Wants of the South”, De Bow’s Review 29 (1860); on the Mezzogiorno, see R. L., “Discorso Preliminare”, Annali Civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie 1 (1833).
Mezzogiorno, the Bourbon government had a comparable weakness in spreading its influence in areas dominated by powerful local elites. Therefore, in both cases, the reformers faced the additional challenge of envisioning the construction of a new political system, which they began to consider as the only real solution to the problem of commercial dependency of the two souths upon more industrialized regions of the world.

*From Economic to Political Nationalism: The Road not Taken*

At the heart of the reformists' concern for a strong economy characterized by commercial agriculture and indigenous industry lay a nationalist ideology. To create the economic means capable of releasing the country from its ties of commercial dependency meant to rescue the nation from backwardness and to bring it up to the economic standards of western Europe or the northern United States. This was true both in the case of the American South and in case of the Italian South, with the important distinction regarding the existence of a monarchy in the latter. The role played by the King of the Two Sicilies in promoting initiatives related to agricultural and industrial development gave economic nationalism in the Mezzogiorno an important political connotation which was lacking in the American South.

In the American South advocates of economic nationalism had a very tortured relationship with slavery, especially cotton slavery. Cotton was, indeed, "King", as James Henry Hammond put it, for cotton production provided the South and the United States as a whole with its major item of trade. Since the early 1800s the total production of cotton had boomed, reaching 4.5 million bales in 1860. Cotton had enabled thousands of aspiring planters to settle the Southwest and leave the soil-depleted areas of the east coast. However, cotton ruled over a shaky ground, since cotton prices were subject to periodic rise and falls according to demand in the world-market. Cotton gave prosperity to the South, but at the same time it
symbolized its commercial dependency upon the industrialized countries which it supplied. Moreover, cotton production was based on slavery and on reliance on mono-crop culture leading to soil exhaustion. For these reasons, advocates of economic nationalism were either cotton planters, like the fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett, who alone thought that the crop they grew could guarantee southern economic independence, or businessmen, like William Gregg, who thought the road to self-sufficiency necessarily passed through crop diversification and spread of industrialization.  

The Southern Commercial Conventions which met regularly from 1837 to 1857 addressed the problem of economic nationalism, posing an alternative between “land and slaves, or commerce and economic diversification”. The problem also involved the definition of nationalism as based on a distinctively southern feature, such as slavery. Planters wanted to perpetuate slavery because they thought it was a distinctive characteristic of the southern way of life; however, by preserving the southern “peculiar institution” they prevented the South from developing along self-sufficient lines. Businessmen and merchants thought that slavery retarded the South’s development by keeping the economy in a state of backwardness and by preventing the investment of significant sums of capital in long-term projects of industrialization and economic diversification. The construction of a strong national economy required reliance on trade in a wide range of products, from manufactured items to cash-crops, that the slave-based agricultural system could not support. Therefore, economic nationalism was understood in two mutually exclusive ways: according to the planters it meant

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95 See again Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery, 85-105. See also E. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1979), 7-8; and Eaton, Growth of Southern Civilization, on the way cotton changed the shape of Southern culture and civilization as a whole. For a modern view of the pervasive influence of cotton on Southern economy, see Woodman, King Cotton and His Retainers.

preserving Southern distinctiveness, while according to businessmen it meant striving for Southern self-sufficiency.  

Moreover, the planters' characterization of the South as a "Cotton Kingdom" obscured the fact that even within slavery there were regional variations in terms of agricultural systems and crops produced. "King Cotton" had many more subjects than cotton planters and their slaves; the older landed aristocracy of Virginia still grew tobacco, which by 1845 was on the road to recovery, while the lowcountry barons of South Carolina continued to grow rice, the price of which remained steady throughout the antebellum period. Compared to them, cotton planters found themselves in dire straits at several times during the 1830s and 1840s. During the Panic of 1837, cotton prices fell to less than 5 cents a pound and throughout the depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s cotton prices continue to fall, reaching their lowest point between 1841 and 1845; only in the late 1840s did prices rise again and cotton was able to regain its preeminence in southern economy.  

Economic nationalism failed to gather influential southerners around the crucial issue of self-sufficiency because of the South's commitment to slavery and because of divergent economic interests among different sections of the elites. Because of these reasons, economic nationalism failed to develop into a political movement encompassing the entire South. Unlike the case of the Mezzogiorno, the American South had no national institution which could function as political point

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97 On southern economic nationalism and slavery, see McCardell, The Idea of a Southern Nation, 104-134.
98 Actually, the Panic of 1837 hit hard both tobacco and cotton production signaling the start of the worst economic depression of the antebellum period. Significant for the mood of agricultural producers at the time is a letter from factor Samuel D. Rawlins from Norfolk to Humberston Skipwith, whose Virginian plantation in Mecklenburg County produced both tobacco and cotton. Rawlins complained about the sudden depreciation of "the two great staples of our country (cotton and tobacco)" and the "almost entire withdrawal of commercial confidence"; he maintained that "never since this country possessed any commerce have difficulties to an equal extent prevailed." Samuel D. Rawlins to Humberston Skipwith, 28 July 1837, Skipwith Family Papers, in K. M. Stampp, gen. ed., Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War on microfilm (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1985).
99 For an overview of the economic crises of the antebellum period in the South, see Cooper and Terrill, The American South, 173-188; on cotton in particular, see Woodman, King Cotton and His Retainers. On the exaggerated importance of "King Cotton" at the expense of other crops, see the
of reference for the elites until the creation of the Confederacy in 1861. Southern economic nationalism, therefore, rested on weak ground; the very assumptions upon which it built its foundations -- slavery and self-sufficiency -- continued to be a matter of contention among different sections of the elites up until the outbreak of the Civil War.¹⁰⁰

A major difference between the economic nationalism promoted by southern planters and businessmen and the one promoted by southern Italian reformists was the role played by the monarchy. The Bourbon government actively supported a strongly nationalist economic policy and, at least in the 1830s and early 1840s, had the support of the progressive sections of the landed elite and of the businessmen. Since his restoration as King of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand I tried to implement progressive economic measures taking up where his predecessor had left off. He tried to mediate between older and newer section of the elite and promoted land reclamation and agricultural reform, while at the same time preserving the absolutist character of the Southern Kingdom. His successor, Ferdinand II, brought the program of reform of the “administrative monarchy” in the Mezzogiorno to its highest peak. Under Ferdinand II economic reform programs were implemented together with protectionist policies directed at encouraging local manufacturing and with political openings toward liberalism. The flourishing of the Economic Societies in the provinces and of nationally-circulated economic reviews supported by the government were a consequence of the collaboration between Ferdinand II and some of the best liberal economists of the time.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Various essays by prominent southern intellectuals in E. N. Elliott, ed., Cotton is King.
¹⁰¹ Regarding the birth of a political movement for the support of southern nationalism in 1861, see D. G. Faust, The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); and W. C. Davis, “A Government of Our Own”: The Making of the Confederacy (New York: Free Press, 1994). The creation of the Confederacy was really the first time in which a “southern nation” came into being transcending regional and ideological differences among different sections of the elites in the name of political independence.

¹⁰¹ An overview of Bourbon economic policy in the period between 1816 and 1848 is in A. Spagnoletti, Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 214-234; see also A. Lepre, Storia del Mezzogiorno d’Italia, Vol. II, 137-162; and R. Romeo, Mezzogiorno e Sicilia nel Risorgimento (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1963), 75-85. For an important first-hand
Between 1845 and 1847, the Kingdom’s reformist impulse reached its peak. Ferdinand II asked for the collaboration of the renown economist Giustino Fortunato at the Ministry of Finances, and created the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, under the advice of Antonio Scialoja. According to Scialoja, the Ministry should function as a supervisory board over the activities of the Economic Societies in the provinces. Scialoja was the most famous liberal economist of his generation; in 1840, he had published *I principii della economia sociale* (Principles of Social Economy) in which he advocated the state support for individual economic enterprises. The creation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce was part of a program of reform that aimed at strengthening entrepreneurial activity in the *Mezzogiorno* at the local level.

In fact, the Economic Societies of the provinces addressed local problems of development and were managed by renowned agronomists who participated in regular scientific meetings on a national basis. Their aim was in line with the governmental policy of modernizing agriculture and encouraging manufacturing. Accordingly, the Societies were divided in two different parts that promoted progress in the agricultural and industrial sectors in the provinces: the rural economy section and the civil economy section. The Economic Societies of the provinces reflected the Kingdom’s idea of economic nationalism, according to which it was the state’s responsibility to create the opportunities for economic growth and self-sufficiency. They represented the Bourbon monarchy’s most successful attempt to create a strong national economy by creating opportunities to integrate industry and agriculture at the local level.

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104 On the Economic Societies of the provinces, see Petrusewicz, *Come il Meridione divenne una...*
Unlike the economic nationalism spread by the government’s propaganda, the one propagated by the landed elite was centered on agriculture rather than industry, and favored free-trade rather than protectionism. A fierce debate between protectionists and free-trade advocates animated the economic journals of the 1830s and 1840s. The central problem was that the government’s support for national manufacture hindered the commercial agricultural sector, which profited from the sale of olive oil, wine, and citrus in the world-market. Moreover, progressive landed elites considered agriculture as the only honorable activity and the only real source of wealth in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Repeatedly, they referred to the Kingdom as an “agricultural nation.” Much like the planters’ commitment to slavery in the American South, the possidenti’s commitment to agriculture in the Mezzogiorno was a way of asserting the region’s distinctive character and of preserving a hierarchical labor system. This can be seen clearly in the writings of members of the elite, such as Francesco De Sanctis, according to whom “the word ‘landowner’ has a kind of magic effect on the spirit”, and Francesco Fuoco, according to whom “the property of land is a central feature of society.” Like the planters, the possidenti aimed to have a strong...

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105 In Giovanni Malvica’s Effemeridi, the debate between protectionists and advocates of free trade went far beyond simple economic issues and became a forum for the exposition of different views of the role of Bourbon Monarchy in relation to the peripheries of the Southern Kingdom. See especially G. Malvica, “Sul cabotaggio fra Napoli e Sicilia”, Effemeridi scientifiche e letterarie per la Sicilia 16:5 (1836) on the debate on the Tariff on foreign imports in the years 1836-1837. Other Sicilian periodicals which participated in the debate include Il Mondo Culto and Il Commercio, both advocates of free trade, like the Effemeridi.

106 A side effect of this attitude was the fabrication of the myth of the happiness of the peasants, described by advocates of the centrality of agriculture as “happy, joyful, and satisfied” since they were lucky enough to be involved in the best possible kind of occupation. For a popular reflection of this view, see V. Fusco, “Elólogo dell’agricola” (In Praise of the Agriculturalist), Gazzetta di Palermo 17 November 1858, 24 November 1858, 1 December 1858, and 8 December 1858.

107 Both quoted in Petruszewicz, Come il Meridione divenne una Questione, 86. Francesco Fuoco was actually the most important southern political economist of the 1820s; see F. Fuoco, Saggi economici (Pisa: Nistri, 1825).
nation of landowners rather than having a self-sufficient country with a diversified economy. 108

In 1830, and then again in the early 1840s, it seemed that the King and the landed elites had found some ground for agreement on the issue of economic nationalism. For a while, in the mid-1840s, Ferdinand II abandoned a strict protectionist policy, and his promotion of the Economic Societies of the provinces found support among the possidenti. The opening in economics went hand in hand with a timid attempt of creating a more liberal monarchical institution, and this was appreciated by most progressive landowners. At that time, it seemed that the project of a self-sufficient nation, headed by a strong King as a symbol of political unity, could be realized. In other words, economic nationalism seemed to be able to develop into a political ideology with the support of the most progressive sections of the elites. Liberal economists, like Antonio Scialoja and Giustino Fortunato, and leading intellectuals, like Francesco De Sanctis and Luigi Settembrini recognized their idea of national monarchy in the kind of progressive reformism implemented by Ferdinand II. They thought that the southern monarchy could form the basis of a nation with a strong economy and liberal institutions if the King continued to promote entrepreneurial activity and continued to rely on the local intellighenzia 109

However, provincial elites did not welcome the kind of modernization from above that the “administrative monarchy” promoted. They saw it as an intrusion of the state in their own affairs and saw the changes as an attempt at destabilizing the power they held in local offices. In the words of John Davis, “the political

108 See Petrusewicz, "Land-Based Modernization and the Culture of Landed Elites". On the Mezzogiorno's elite' commitment to “land and peasants” rather than industry, see the critique in R. De Cesare, La fine di un regno (Milan: Longanesi, 1969; orig. pub. 1895), 321, where the author contends that “the Kingdom was lagging far behind in industrialization: the only industrial centers were the valleys of the Liri, Irno, and Sabato ... [with] the cotton, linen, and wool manufactures, founded by Swiss industrialists.”
consequences of the Bourbons’ failure to create a political base in a modern, or modernizing bureaucracy was the most damaging because the economic strategy to which they had committed themselves was to have the effect of isolating the dynasty from the dominant economic interests in the South”, the interests of the landed bourgeoisie. 110 Then, during the 1848 Revolution, the King reverted back to his old absolutist and protectionist policies, losing once for all the support of the progressive sections of the landed elites. As in the American South before 1861, economic nationalism failed to develop into a political movement because of the failure to reconcile ideological and regional differences within the elites. 111

The economies of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno in the first half of the nineteenth century depended upon demand for raw materials from more industrialized countries. Their entrepreneurial elites based their wealth on the production and sale of valuable crops in the world-market and, in doing this, perpetuated the economic dependency of the two souths. Economic reformers in both countries addressed the problem of dependency and sought to resolve it through agricultural diversification and the creation of industries. Several journals dedicated to economic progress appeared between 1815 and 1860. Two of them -- De Bow’s Review and the Annali Civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie -- proved especially influential because of their national circulation and their commitment to a far-reaching policy of economic progress.

The self-sufficiency advocated by economic reformers can be seen as a form of economic nationalism. In their view, to rescue the country from commercial dependency was the first step toward the creation of a strong nation. However, in both souths economic nationalism did not develop into a political movement before 1860 because of conflicting interests and regional differences among the

111 On the end of the Bourbon Kingdom, see Spagnoletti, Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie, 276-306. On the provincial elites’ opposition to the Bourbon monarchy in the nineteenth-century Mezzogiorno, see also E. Di Ciommo, “Elites provinciali e potere borbonico. Note per una ricerca comparata” in A. Massafra, ed., II Mezzogiorno preunitario. On 1848 and the end of the collaboration between progressive landowners and economists and Bourbon reformism, see
articulate members of the elites. The main difference was between advocates of the primacy of agriculture and advocates of the diversification of the economy and expansion of industry; even stronger were the differences between elites of different regions in regard to the influence and the role of the state in peripheral areas. The failure of Southern Italian and Southern nationalism to become political movements before 1860 means that nationalism could become a political program based on economic premises only in small, self-contained regions where the elite in power was homogenous and had a long tradition of opposition to external influences in local affairs. As we will see in Chapters Five and Six, the examples of South Carolina and Sicily demonstrate this.

Petrusewicz, Come il Meridione divenne una Questione, 105-134.
Chapter Four
Ideological Differences within the Elites: Patriarchalism and Paternalism

Throughout the nineteenth century the landed elites of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno were divided about ideological issues. On one hand, several members of the older sections of the two elites continued to rely on patriarchalism - the dominant ideology of the previous century. On the other hand, most members of the newer sections embraced a new paternalistic ethos with an ideology of reciprocity. This chapter aims to explain in detail the characteristics of these two worldviews and to show how in both souths ideological differences were the decisive factor which prevented the formation of a unified ruling elite with nationalistic aspirations.

In its nineteenth century form, patriarchalism was an adaptation of eighteenth century aristocratic values, both within the family and in society at large. As in the eighteenth century, patriarchal planters in the American South and patriarchal noblemen in the Italian South demanded obedience and respect for their authority from their sons, whose duty was to obey. At the same time, patriarchs demanded obedience and respect from their workforce on their landed estates. However, acting as absentee landowners, patriarchs often left administration and management in the hands of overseers and stewards, creating a permanent communication gap between masters and laborers. 1

In the nineteenth century, a new paternalistic ethos had emerged and started to replace the old patriarchalism among some sections of the landed elites of the two

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1 For some insightful comments on the adaptations of patriarchal ideology in the nineteenth century antebellum South, see B. Wyatt-Brown, “The Ideal Typology and Ante-Bellum Southern History: A Testing of a New Approach”, Societas 5:1 (1975); in particular, Wyatt-Brown says that “in the raising of children and the expectations surrounding adult roles, the southern family relied on oral tradition and male authoritarianism, both conventions that were rapidly being modified in the commercial and organizational bustle of the free states” (5). For the Italian case, see P. Macry, Ottocento. Famiglia, elites e patrimoni a Napoli (Turin: Einaudi, 1988); Macry writes that in the nineteenth century, “the [patriarchal] family becomes the substitute and the symbol of a long-gone
souths. The advocates of paternalism mostly belonged to the newer sections of the two elites. Typically, they were planters-in-the-making in the American South, and landed bourgeois in the Italian South. These new classes believed in the necessity of relations of reciprocity both within the family and in society. They had more affectionate and balanced relationships with their children, and they extended the idea of reciprocity to relations with their workforce. Consequently, they constructed an ideology according to which they were obliged to attend to the well-being of their laborers in return for the work performed for them.²

Patriarchal planters and paternalistic noblemen lived in separate worlds and had different ideas about social relations within the family and on the landed estates. The difference in worldview between the two sections of the landed elites also extended to the public sphere and conditioned the process of political development in both souths. Particularly charismatic leaders embodied the characteristics of the old patriarchal ethos and of the new paternalistic ethos at the level of national politics; they sought to be considered the chosen representatives of unified ruling classes, and they lay the foundations for the transformation of the elites' ideologies into political nationalisms. However, their attempts failed because of the internal divisions within the two ruling classes. Whilst patriarchalism could be only the political ideology of a restricted and conservative part of the landed aristocracy, paternalism was the political creed of the new classes of landed proprietors. This division conditioned the outcome of the elites’ support for nationalist programs and was the main factor that prevented the transformation of the two souths into nation-states before 1861.

² The shift from patriarchalism to paternalism in America is outlined in A. C. Rose, Victorian America and the Civil War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Rose calls paternalism “the emerging customs based on reciprocal sentiment” which replaced patriarchy, “the traditional system of family deference” (147). A comparable shift, from an aristocratic to a bourgeois conception of the family in Italy, is described in G. Monroni, “La famiglia borghese” in P. Melograni, ed., La famiglia italiana dall'Ottocento a oggi (Rome-Bari, Laterza: 1988), 132-137.
Patriarchalism, the social ethos related to patriarchal ideology, informed the daily life of the major aristocratic families of the American South and Italian Mezzogiorno throughout the eighteenth century. It was characterized by rigid authoritarianism and deference within the family and by respect for hierarchy and status in the outside world. The figure of the father — *pater familias* — at the same time head of the household and head of society, demanding absolute obedience from his wife and children and from his servants and slaves, was at its core. Obedience and authority often led the patriarchs to resort to violence. Brutal punishments were the norm for disobedient children and ill-disciplined servants and slaves. ³

In the nineteenth century, patriarchalism was still very much alive among some of the most prominent families of both souths, particularly the oldest ones. ⁴ In the American South, the old tobacco aristocracy of Virginia and the old rice aristocracy of South Carolina still held on to the patriarchal ideology that had characterized the eighteenth-century world. In the Italian South, the oldest noble families, mostly owners of wheat-growing *latifondi*, still regarded deference and respect for hierarchy and status as the foundations of family life and of the social order as a whole. ⁵

Patriarchal ideology aimed to preserve the social order through recognition of the importance of fixed roles in family and society. Consequently, formality characterized relations between patriarchs and their wives and children, while discipline and detachment characterized relations between planters and noblemen

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³ I have described eighteenth-century patriarchal ideology in Chapter Two.
and the workers on their landed estates. In both cases, the underlining idea was that women, children and members of the lower classes were “naturally suited for subordination, and the male heads of the household ... were naturally fitted to command this subordination”.  

In Democracy in America (1839), Alexis de Tocqueville described the patriarchal family as “aristocratic”, seeing it function according to a hierarchy of age and sex. At the top of the hierarchy stood the husband/father, who was “not only the civil head of the family, but the organ of its traditions, the expounder of its customs, the arbiter of its manners.” Wife and children listened to him with deference, addressed him with respect, and loved him and feared him at the same time. This is why in the correspondence of aristocratic families, the letters show a style “always correct, ceremonious, stiff, and so cold that the natural warmth of the heart can hardly be felt in the language.”

In a previous chapter, Tocqueville wrote about the relations between masters and servants in aristocratic societies. Some of his observations can be used to describe the effects of patriarchalism in the two souths. In particular, he wrote that in aristocratic societies,

> the master readily obtains prompt, complete, respectful, and easy obedience from his servants, because they revere in him not only their master, but their class of masters. He weighs down their will by the whole weight of the aristocracy. He orders their actions; to a certain extent, he even directs their thoughts ... Among an aristocratic people the master gets to look upon his servants as an inferior and secondary part of himself, and he often takes an interest in their lot by a last stretch of selfishness.

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6 See P. W. Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 27. Bardaglio writes that the “preservation of the social order, not just domestic tranquillity rested on the smooth and effective functioning of the patriarchal network. In the organic model that served as the ideal of the Old South, people were supposed to know their own places as well as what part they played in the overall functioning of the society” (27). Regarding the Italian South, see the definition of patriarchal family in Macry, Ottocento; Macry notes that “within the [patriarchal] household the roles are fixed, the power of the father is strong and unchallenged; wife, children, and servants are tightly subordinated to him. The paradigm is hierarchical and the relationships [within the family], even the ones between master and servants, are deferential rather than contractual” (xiv).


8 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 179.
Social hierarchy was a given in patriarchal ideology. It implied obedience and deference of the lower classes toward the upper classes. According to an eighteenth-century Virginian lawyer, “societies of men could not subsist unless there were a subordination of one to another ... that in this subordination the department of slaves must be filled by some, or there would be a defect in the scale of order.” 9 He was echoed by Federico Di Napoli, an eighteenth-century Sicilian nobleman: “the good rule ... from which the people gain ... can only come from subordination ... so that people know how to obey and their superiors dispense justice with the authority that we have given them”. 10

The stress on subordination implied obedience and, at the same time, detachment between upper classes and lower classes. Masters and workers lived in separate worlds: patriarchal planters and slaves and patriarchal noblemen and peasants tended to have personal contact very rarely. The distance was even greater in the case of absentee landownership, as in most of southern Italy and in some areas of Virginia and coastal South Carolina. In this situation, slaves and peasants became distant problems to be resolved by overseers and administrators. 11

To be sure, in the American South, slaves’ obedience was maintained through discipline and constant violence; the whip was the permanent symbol of authority of the patriarchs, whether they were resident or absentee. In the Italian South, there was little violence to speak of, but the threat was always present; often noblemen had armed guards, who represented their authority on the latifondi. In both cases, the combination of detachment and authoritarian relations created a permanent gap of communication between masters and workers. 12

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9 Quoted in Morgan, Slave Counterpoint, 258.
12 The constant presence of violence was the one of the main differences between American
Correspondence between fathers and children show how the authority of patriarchal planters and noblemen in the two souths greatly influenced the personal lives of their sons and daughters. Patriarchs expected their children to receive a proper education and to maintain the honor of the family name. Their conduct in public was constantly watched, and codified rules severely restricted their behavior. Respectability, pursuit of virtue, dignity, and fulfillment of duty were all qualities that patriarchs demanded from their children. Consequently, the absence of these qualities was punished with increasing distance and detachment. 13

The correspondence between Virginian James Coles Bruce (1800-1864), one of the wealthiest planters in the American South, and his father James Bruce (1763-1837), illuminates this point. 14 Writing in 1826 from Cambridge, Massachusetts --

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13 Important observations on the nature of patriarchal relations between fathers and sons are in M. P. Johnson, “Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800-1860”, Journal of Southern History 46 (1980), 49-53. Johnson writes that the “authority of the father structured patriarchal families” and that the importance attached to family names was but “the most obvious evidence of the planter’s glorification of the father” (49). The sons’ duty was to honor their father, and “to honor one’s father, one deferred to his authority, studied his wishes, and obeyed his commands. In short, one remained subordinate” (50). See also Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s discussion on the influence of concepts of honor and shame on naming patterns and on child rearing in B. Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 117-148, 149-174.

14 The Bruces were tobacco planters of the region called “Southside” Virginia; they owned several plantations and farms in Halifax, Charlotte, Pittsylvania, and Roanoke County in Virginia and in neighboring counties of North Carolina. The total value of James Bruce’s estate was more than $4,000,000; this figure made him one of wealthiest individuals not just in the South, but in the whole of the United States. On the Bruce family, see W. L. Rose, ed., A Documentary History of Slavery in North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).
where he was attending Harvard University -- James Coles Bruce addressed his father with the affectionate “My Dear Father”, but his letters show that he did not gain much confidence from him. In fact, in spite of all his efforts, James Bruce scrupulously maintained an emotional distance between himself and his son, either by chronically delaying his replies to him, or by overstating the frequent misunderstandings between them.

In one of his frequent complaints about the lack of replies, James Coles Bruce wrote: “Your last letter to me bears the date of the 17th of February [it was May 14th] ... I have attributed your silence to absence from home, ill health, and displeasure; if it be the latter, I can only say that it has been most immerited on my part. Nothing can be more chilly to a person of sensibility than neglect from a father.” 15 James Bruce’s behavior toward his son reminds us that patriarchal planters gave their confidence to their sons and took it away from them at will. They decided how close the father-son relationship should be, and when the distance between them should be increased. It is no wonder that particularly sensitive sons, like James Coles Bruce, felt neglected by their fathers.

In a previous letter, trying to discharge himself from his father’s unjust accusation of having wasted a large sum of money, James Coles Bruce wrote:

I once thought that your confidence in my prudence and discretion was too firm to be shaken by a circumstance so slight ... The distance which separates us, I assure you, has no effect in influencing my conduct ... Dissipation and extravagance I have never entered into, and never in the course of my life have I been so attentive to my studies as I am at the present time ... I am sorry for the uneasings which you must experience before the reception of this letter, when I hope you will see your mistake and return me the confidence which an accident has robbed me of. You wish me to consider this letter confidential, I obey you ... 16

Patriarchal planters made clear to their sons that, if they wanted attention from their

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15 James Coles Bruce to James Bruce, 14 May 1826, Bruce Family Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, in K. M. Stampp, gen. ed., Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from Revolution through the Civil War on microfilm (Frederick: University Publications of America) [from now on, RASP]..

16 James Coles Bruce to James Bruce, 30 January 1826, Bruce Family Papers, RASP.
fathers, they had to conform to the codified rules of behavior of their family and of their class. According to these rules, sons had to behave in an exemplary way while they were away from home studying. They could hardly indulge in any kind of enjoyment and had constantly to remind themselves that their behavior, like the behavior of their fellow students, was regarded as representative of their upper class family’s moral standards. As long as they followed parental advice and conformed perfectly to the rules dictated by family and society, sons could hope to have some confidence from their fathers as a kind of reward for performing their duty. However, at the slightest mistake, the situation would turn against them and, as in James Coles Bruce’s case, sons would lose the little confidence they had from their fathers and would have to work hard to obtain it again. 17

Different rules of codified behavior, equally strict, characterized the expectations of patriarchal planters toward their daughters. From a very early age, daughters were raised being constantly reminded of the fact that their main goal in life was to marry a rich planter; those daughters who did not succeed in getting married were seen as disgraceful and brought shame to the life of the family. At around the age of sixteen, girls were supposed to start to be courted by eligible elite men at balls, parties, or at church; the main object of female education in the antebellum South was to make girls attractive to elite men and to prepare them for their future married life. In order to reach this goal, girls were taught how to behave properly, in a lady-like manner and how to be obedient, purposeful, and pious. Although female education was widespread in the South during the antebellum period and several elite women were taught these fundamental precepts of patriarchal ideology in special academies, the real schooling started at home. Within the domestic walls of

17 Perhaps also as a consequence of this early harsh education, James Coles Bruce set to become a model role in his family; after studying at Harvard and at the University of Virginia, he married Eliza Wilkins in 1829, served in the state legislature several times, and traveled extensively throughout the South, all the while managing successfully his plantations in Halifax County. Shearer Davis Bowman writes that by the time he was in his early sixties Bruce “was the only member of the 1861 secession convention who, according to the 1860 census, owned more than a hundred slaves (134 to be exact) in a single county”; see S. D. Bowman, Masters and Lords: Mid-19th Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 181.
the big house patriarchal planters made sure that their daughters learned how to be obedient to their future husbands by learning first how to be obedient to their father.18

A particularly illuminating document on the education of daughters in an elite family and the kind of expectations that patriarchal planters had about them is Elizabeth Allston Pringle’s published autobiography Chronicles of Chicora Wood.19 Pringle (1845-1921) was the daughter of Robert Allston, the richest rice planter of Georgetown District, in lowcountry South Carolina, and the last descendant of one of the oldest and most illustrious families in the state (see below). In 1831, Allston had married Adele Petigru, descendant of another renowned family, and together they had moved to the rice plantation of Chicora Wood, on the Waccamaw river. Elizabeth’s recollections start from this point in time and take the reader all the way to her own marriage, through several episodes, character sketches and reports of conversations that add a great deal to our understanding of patriarchal ideology and the way it worked in the everyday life of a family. Throughout the book, the admiration for her father’s patriarchal authority, strong will, determined character, and ability to teach his wives and children discipline and obedience, is clear and can be followed in several episodes.20

In one of the most meaningful conversations reported by Elizabeth in her

18 The literature on patriarchy and gender is enormous; some of the most important issues related to it have been touched in Chapter Two. The point of departure is Gerda Lerner’s description of patriarchal society as one characterized by “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general”; see G. Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 239. For some perceptive insights on the influence of patriarchal education on elite women, see C. A. Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994); see also A. F. Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 30-31; and S. G. McMillen, Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1992), 77-80.
recollections, her aunt Blythe tells her mother the implications of being the wife of a planter in connection to the stress placed by patriarchal ideology on discipline and restraint:

Adele, it is a life of self-repression and effort, but it is ... a very noble life, if a woman does her full duty in it ... To be the wife of a rice planter is no place for a pleasure-loving, indolent woman, but for an earnest, true-hearted woman, it is a great opportunity, a great education. To train others one must first train oneself; it requires method, power of organization, grasp of detail, perception of character, power of speech; above all, endless self-control. 21

The education of a woman in a patriarchal family stressed self-repression and self-control because those were the qualities that made her the perfect planter’s wife, a wife who obeyed her husband without questioning his authority. In this connection, exercising self-discipline was the greatest education of all in a patriarchal family. For this reason, the wives of patriarchal planters, like Adele Petigru, internalized the discipline and submission they had been subjected by their father and their husbands, and they taught this to their daughters, stressing the fact that they were a substantial part of any earnest woman’s full duty in life. 22

Often, patriarchal planters taught their daughters how to be disciplined and submissive without their wives as intermediaries, since they wanted to be absolutely sure they understood the lesson and would not make mistakes with their future husbands. In her recollections, Elizabeth Allston Pringle wrote about an episode in which she was taught a lesson in discipline by her father that she never forgot. Apparently, when she was three, Elizabeth stole a peach from the sideboard of the dining room without her father realizing it; subsequently, her father asked her to tell him the truth about the stolen peach and she lied to him. He told her “that is a

21 Pringle, Chronicles of “Chicora Wood”, 77-78.
terrible thing to have done, and I must punish you, so that you may never fall so low again.” That very night, Elizabeth’s father gave her a severe switching and then put her into bed. When she woke up, she was “happy and peaceful, and, above all, filled with a kind of adoration” for her father.

I have never ceased to feel grateful to papa for the severity of my punishment. It had to be remembered, and it meant the holding aloft of honesty and truth, and the trampling in the dust of dishonesty and falsehood. No child is too young to have these basic principles taught them.

As a matter of fact, the punishment was given to Elizabeth first and foremost because she had trespassed her father’s authority by eating a peach without asking for his permission; the punishment had to be severe, because she had to remember that she could not subvert the basic principles ruling the life of patriarchal families without suffering any consequence. This harsh training and submission to her father’s authority was supposed to prepare her for her married life, when she would have to submit to her husband’s authority and would suffer much more severe consequences in social terms if she did not do it. However, Elizabeth not only learned the lesson, but she also internalized the patriarchal principles behind it in such a way that she came to see this episode as proof of her father’s love for her, since he wanted her to learn what she needed most in life as an elite woman: the ability to be submissive and self-restrained with the male head of the household, whether it be her father or her husband.

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23 Pringle, Chronicles of “Chicora Wood”, 110-111. This episode seems to be a perfect example of what Bertram Wyatt-Brown calls “the tendency ... to seek ways whereby children would internalize virtues and fears of wrongdoing, chiefly through conscience and guilt”; see Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 155.

24 In her adult life, Elizabeth continued to adore her father and, perhaps out of love for his occupation, she devoted several years of her life to rice planting; she described her experience in a series of articles published as E. Allston Pringle, A Woman Rice Planter (New York, 1913). The relation between the family education of elite women and their married life as plantation mistresses in the antebellum South’s patriarchal system is analyzed in C. Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 59-86. Although the antebellum South seems to fits neatly Gerda Lerner’s idea of a patriarchal society, an increasing number of recent studies have argued for a stronger presence of married women beyond the household and in the public sphere despite the patriarchal constrains. In her study of colonial and early republican southern women, Cynthia Kierner argues that “within the confines of patriarchy and
Detachment was even greater between southern Italian patriarchs and their children. The authority of the fathers demanded respect in all matters of public behavior, and especially in matters of marriage choice. Unlike the U.S. South, where primogeniture had been abolished, in the Italian South laws of primogeniture still prevailed and contributed enormously to the distance between parents and children, especially given that the choice of the marriage partner was based almost exclusively on the transmission of the family patrimony. Moreover, there were several other constraints on the partners' choice, including the fact that the codified rules relating to the honor of the family name demanded that aristocrats marry their equal.  

The correspondence between Sicilian Diego Pignatelli, Duke of Monteleone, and his wife Maria Carmela Caracciolo, the Duchess, illustrates this point particularly well. The Dukes of Monteleone belonged to one of the foremost families of the southern Italian nobility; traditionally they had always married within the highest ranks of the Sicilian aristocracy. In 1815, Diego Pignatelli was looking for a

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25 On the link between aristocratic succession, family patrimony, and family name see Macry, Ottocento, 9-15; in his analysis of nineteenth-century wills among Neapolitan noblemen, Macry points out that "the Neapolitan Code of 1819 acknowledged the masculine and patriarchal character of family hierarchies and protected the continuity of family patrimony" (9). For a critical analysis of the nineteenth-century laws of primogeniture, see G. Monroni, Gli uomini del Re. La nobiltà napoletana nell'Ottocento (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1996), 55-61; Monroni concludes that "the analysis of the use of the maggiorascato has confirmed the preference of southern aristocrats for models of succession which, even if not egalitarian, smoothed out excessive differences [in the sons' treatment]" (59).

26 In addition to being Dukes of Monteleone, the Pignatelli were also Princes of Castelvetrano, in Calabria, where they had extensive landholdings; moreover, they owned several mines in Mexico as a consequence of their seventeenth-century marriages with the Cortès, the descendants of the Spanish conquistador. The Pignatelli ranked extremely high among the titled noble families of Sicily. Raffaele De Cesare says that "the Pignatelli had an annual income higher than 200,000 ducats" and that "until the beginning of the twentieth century they possessed the largest capital in the island"; see R. De Cesare, La fine di un regno (Milan: Longanesi, 1969; orig. pub. 1895).
suitable wife for his son Giuseppe. He wished to marry him to a woman of the same social standing, but Giuseppe was in love with a woman from the lower nobility. The Duke wrote to his wife:

I left in the summer ... to reach my feudal estates ... I received a letter in which they told me that my son was in love with a noble girl, but not of the same standing; I summoned him, while I was in Menfi, I reproached him, and he agreed that the girl was not convenient to him, but he said that he did not like at all the young daughter of Paternò [the daughter of a Prince, whom the Duke had started considering as a possible wife for him]. 27

Giuseppe did not have much of a choice. Paternal will had to be followed, and his protests fell on deaf ears. His father had definite ideas on the choice of his partner. In a subsequent letter, the Duke wrote to his wife, listing possible wives, all belonging to the highest nobility. He then commented, “I would consider myself lucky if he chose one of his cousins, either the daughter of Cutò or the daughter of Campofranco, perfect people, with good and healthy manners” 28 The following year, Giuseppe, obeying to his father wishes, married the daughter of the Prince of Campofranco -- Bianca Lucchesi Palli -- even though he had declared his love for another woman. 29

As in the families of patriarchal American planters, in the families of Italian patriarchal noblemen respect for the fathers’ authority and children’s obedience to their parents’ will were beyond question. The respect that young aristocrats owed to social and family traditions, according to which noblemen had to marry noblewomen of the same social standing, was strictly linked to the respect that they, as children, owed their fathers. By demanding that their children respect traditional rules of social behavior, patriarchal noblemen insisted on respect for the traditions

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27 Diego Pignatelli to Maria Carmela Caracciolo, 20 December 1815, Aragona-Pignatelli-Cortès Family Papers, Archivio di Stato di Napoli (from now on abbreviated as ASN).
28 Diego Pignatelli to Maria Carmela Caracciolo, 12 June 1817, ASN.
29 Five daughters were born out of the 1818 marriage between Giuseppe Pignatelli (1795-1859) and Bianca Lucchesi Palli (1801-1884); it is interesting to notice that Giuseppe seemed to have acted similarly to his father regarding the choice of his children's spouse. In his study of Palermo between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Orazio Cancila mentions the problems that Giuseppe had in marrying his daughters to the perfect match in terms of titles and wealth; see O. Cancila, Palermo (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 1988), 16.
which gave them authority over their offspring. According to those traditions, the
children’s duty in matters of marriage was, as in the case of Giuseppe Pignatelli,
agreement with their fathers’ spousal choice and compliance with their fathers’
will.30

Patriarchal rules were particularly strict in the case of the marriage of daughters of
prominent noblemen. As in the American South, elite girls were taught from an
eyear age that their goal in life was to marry elite men who shared their same status
in society. However, unlike the case of the American South, there was very little
formal education in the nineteenth century Mezzogiorno; patriarchal values and
expectations were transmitted from parents to daughters within the household rather
than at school. Therefore, the kind of day-to-day education that elite daughters
received within the family was far more influential in shaping their characters and
beliefs than any external stimulus. Elite women in the nineteenth century
Mezzogiorno grew up much more convinced of the necessity of holding on to the
patriarchal values taught to them than elite women in the antebellum South.31

Patriarchal education stressed self-restraint, self-control, and submission to the
authority of both parents, and of the father in particular. This was especially true in
the case of marriage, where daughters usually had to comply with their fathers’
choice of spouse. However, unlike what occurred in the American South, those elite
daughters who did not manage to marry suitable noblemen often were locked in a
convents and forced to become nuns, so that they did not shame the family name by
living on their own. Although this custom was much less widespread than in the
previous century, there were still several cases of noblewomen committed to
convents among families belonging to both the Neapolitan and Sicilian

30 This discussion fits the description of authoritarian relations centered around the will of the pater
familias which characterizes patriarchal families and described in M. Barbagli, Sotto lo stesso tetto.
31 On the persistence of patriarchal values in the history of the Italian family, see R. P. Saller and D.
I. Kertzer, “Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on Italian Family Life” in D. I. Kertzer and
R. P. Saller, eds., The Family in Italy: From Antiquity to the Present (New Haven: Yale University
Press, 1991). See also M. Barbagli and D. Kertzer, “Introduction” in M. Barbagli and D. Kertzer,
Aristocracies. \footnote{An overview of aristocratic convents in Naples and Palermo is in H. Hills, “Monasteri femminili aristocratici a Napoli e Palermo nella prima età moderna e la conventualizzazione della città”, in G. Fiume, ed., Il Santo Patrono e la città. San Benedetto il Moro (Venice: Marsilio, 1999). An increasingly larger body of scholarship looks at the relationship between women and religious life in modern Italy; useful insights on the life of nuns belonging to aristocratic families can be found in the essays in G. Zarri, ed., Il monachesimo femminile in Italia (Verona: Gabrielli, 1997) and in L. Scaraffia and G. Zarri, eds., Donne e fede. Santità e vita religiosa in Italia (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994). For an important case-study in the Sicilian aristocracy, see S. Cabibbo and M. Modica, La santa dei Tomasi. Storia di Suor Maria Crocifissa (1645-1699) (Turin: Einaudi, 1989).}

A famous case was the one of Enrichetta Caracciolo, who in 1864 published I misteri del chiostro napoletano (The Mysteries of a Neapolitan Cloister) the recollections of her life as a nun in a Neapolitan convent. \footnote{See E. Caracciolo, Misteri del chiostro napoletano (Florence: Giunti, 1886; orig. pub. 1864).} Enrichetta belonged to one of Naples’ most illustrious aristocratic families, the Caracciolo, Princes of Forino. Enrichetta’s father served as high civil officer in the administration of the Kingdom’s provinces; in 1827, he was sent to Calabria, and his family, including the six-year old Enrichetta, followed him. Whilst in Calabria, Enrichetta’s three sisters married local noblemen and, by the time she was fourteen, she was the only daughter left at home. Although she dreamed of meeting eligible men and marrying like her sisters, Enrichetta did not stand much of a chance, since “the education that our mother gave us was extremely rigorous” – she writes in her memoirs – “She measured the time during which we were allowed to stay on the balcony to enjoy the sight of the public walk; the least transgression of these rules was treated with a severe punishment.” \footnote{See Enrichetta Caracciolo, I misteri del chiostro napoletano (Florence: Giunti, 1864).}

During her years in Calabria, Enrichetta made the mistake of falling in love with Domenico, the son of a local civil servant, who did not have a noble title. Although she corresponded with the young man, she encountered opposition from both families, who did not approve of the union. After several failed attempts at convincing Enrichetta not to pursue Domenico any further, both parents forbade her to see him again. Shortly afterwards, Enrichetta’s father died, and the Caracciolo went back to Naples, where her mother continued to teach her daughter the same patriarchal values of submission and self-restraint that she had learned as a girl. Consequently, she continued to be repressive toward Enrichetta, even after her
husband died. She decided that, not finding any suitable candidate for marriage to her daughter among her equals, she would have locked her into a convent for her own benefit. In a remarkable scene in which Enrichetta protested her right to not become a nun against her will, with a single sentence her mother made perfectly clear, as a parent, her authority over her daughter was absolute: “I am the only arbiter of your fate ... both human laws and divine laws impose obedience upon you, and, for the sake of God, you will obey!”  

Obedience and submission were the only behaviors allowed to children in a patriarchal household; the Caracciolo were no exception. 

Enrichetta, now twenty years old, was forced to become a nun and spent the next twenty years of her life in a convent because she had to submit to her mother’s authority. Like Elizabeth Allston’s mother, Enrichetta’s mother had internalized the patriarchal ideology that lay behind the education that she had received and wished to transmit it to her daughter. The case of Enrichetta’s mother also shows that in the patriarchal family, the father-husband’s will was absolute, and both wife and children had to conform to it. However, in the case of absence or death of the male parent, the female parent often took his place as head of the household, and imposed her own will over the children, thereby ensuring the perpetuation of the system of authoritarian relations within the family, which lay at the basis of patriarchal ideology.

36 According to Giovanni Montroni, still in the nineteenth century “8.8 per cent of the women in the Caracciolo clan ended up in convents”; see Montroni, *Gli uomini del Re*, 61.  
37 For a critical view of traditional ideas regarding female oppression in the patriarchal society of southern Italy, see G. Fiume, “Making Women Visible in the History of the *Mezzogiorno*”, paper delivered at the Commonwealth Fund Conference “Two Souths: Toward an Agenda for Comparative Study of the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno*”, University College London, January 1999. An interesting case of resistance to patriarchal oppression regarding courtship and the choice of partner in a patriarchal family is the one reported in letters sent by the Princess of Lampedusa to the Prince of S. Antimo in 1832. The Tomasi, who were both Princes of Lampedusa and Dukes of Palma, belonged to a particularly prestigious Sicilian noble family; in 1832, the Princess of Lampedusa, acting in place of her husband, was looking for a suitable candidate for marriage to her daughter. Apparently, the Prince of S. Antimo, Vincenzo Ruffo, who belonged to the aristocracy of Calabria, had let the Princess of Lampedusa’s daughter believe that he wanted to marry her; however, he thought it was only a misunderstanding with no consequence. The Princess’ daughter, instead, took it extremely seriously and, in an interesting reversal of Enrichetta Caracciolo’s case,
In both Souths, patriarchs gave overarching importance to family names. In the American South, family names lent identity to individual aristocrats by linking them to well-known planter dynasties. It is clear from diaries and letters collected in planters’ family papers that to be a Heyward, a Ball, or a Middleton, meant both to be symbolically linked to important patriarchs of the past and to be identified with a minority of traditionally wealthy people in the present. Consequently, patriarchal planters expected their children to take over the family business with a particular devotion toward the family name and to continue to be recognized first and foremost as planters themselves.  

Several prominent patriarchal planters wrote to their sons asking them to behave themselves in order to make clear that they belonged to a wealthy aristocratic family. This was especially the case with planters involved in politics and pursuing an active public life. Their political role demanded a consistency between the public image of their private life and their pretensions to represent the community. Consequently, politically involved planters pressed their sons in a particularly insistent way about behaving properly, especially when the boys were away from home to study. Robert Allston, for example, had good reason to worry about the effects of his sons’ behavior on his public image. His family was one of the oldest and most illustrious families of South Carolina; as his predecessor had been before him, he was one of the most important planters of the Georgetown district and a renowned politician. In the late 1840s and early 1850s he was serving in the South Carolina Senate in Columbia. It comes scarcely as a surprise that his wife Adele

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38 According to Michael P. Johnson, “the ultimate way for a son to honor his father was to become a planter-patriarch himself”; see Johnson, “Planters and Patriarchy”, 56.

39 Robert Francis Wither Allston (1810-1864) was the husband of Adele Petigru (1810-1896), whom
Petigru Allston filled her letters to their son Benjamin with phrases such as “I would have you so conduct yourself that anyone might be pleased to claim you as a relative.”

At the time, Benjamin was studying at West Point, following his father’s footsteps. Clearly, Benjamin’s behavior at such a strict and prestigious school would have had an effect on the overall image of the Allstons and on the honor of the family name. For this reason, Adele Petigru returned time and again in the letters to the importance of following the patriarchal ethos of obedience to authority and conformity to the rules: “you must now set in, in earnest to study, and I beseech you give Mr.Cotes no cause to complain of you, on the contrary deserve and gain his respect and esteem”; and again, “I went to the church this morning, the upper church. Mr. Glennie gave an excellent sermon, impressing upon us the necessity of obedience as well as faith, obedience being the proof of our faith, the evidence of its being a living faith.”

The fact that Benjamin was the elder son in the Allston family put particular pressure on the necessity of a model behavior on his side, a behavior which would lift him above the crowd and allow him to become a honorable gentleman. His father Robert was ready to resort to any means in order to instill these ideas in his son’s mind. These means certainly included severe beating, as several letters from Adele Petigru to Benjamin imply: “we were sorry to hear that there had been some disturbance in Mr. Cotes’ school. When your father heard of it, he said ‘I am very

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he married in 1832, and the father of Benjamin Allston (1833-1900) and Elizabeth Allston Pringle (see above). He was one of the richest planters of his generation, owning in 1860 a total of 630 slaves, scattered on the five rice plantations of “Chicora Wood”, which he inherited from his father Benjamin, “Waverly”, which he inherited from his brother Joseph, “Waccamaw”, which he inherited from his aunt Elizabeth Allston Blyth, “Nightingale Hall”, which he acquired in the 1840s, and “Brookgreen”, which he purchased in 1857. He graduated from West Point in 1821, served in the South Carolina House between 1828 and 1831. He was member of the South Carolina Senate between 1832 and 1856 and President of the Senate between 1850 and 1856; Allston’s political career reached its peak when he served as Governor of South Carolina between 1856 and 1858. For more information on the Allston family, see Dusinberre, Them Dark Days, 285-291; and Easterby, The South Carolina Rice Plantation, 11-19.

40 Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston, 6 August 1850, Robert F. W. Allston Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston (from now on SCHS).
41 Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston, 4 January 1849, Robert F. W. Allston Papers, SCHS.
42 Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston, 14 December 1849, Robert F. W. Allston Papers, SCHS.
glad Ben had nothing to do with it. There is nothing I would flog him for so soon as resisting or insulting his teacher ... I trust he has learnt his catechism to better purpose and that he is incapable of such an act.”43 However, what was particularly important in Benjamin’s case was that, given his father’s political prominence, he was expected to demonstrate through his conduct that his patriarchal father had instilled in him proper rules of behavior, thus linking the Allston name to the family’s unquestionably high moral profile. Robert Allston probably thought that some day Benjamin would follow in his footsteps, and so prepared him to honor the family name from his very early years.44

In the Italian Mezzogiorno, patriarchal nobles acted according to what historian Paolo Macry has dubbed “logica del cognome” (logic of the surname). The testaments that Neapolitan nobles wrote in the first half of the nineteenth century reveal constant worry about the dispersion of the family patrimony and the attempts of linking it from generation to generation to the family name. To be a Monteleone, a Caracciolo, or a Notarbartolo, meant much more than to be identified with wealthy patriarchal families. To be part of the titled nobility meant to bear all the weight of a tradition of prestige related to the possession of large amounts of land. Southern Italian nobles expected their sons to take care of the administration of the family estates and to do everything to preserve them intact.45

Like southern planters, Southern Italian patriarchal nobles were worried about the continuation of the aristocratic standard of the family name. Some of them held traditional privileged posts in the royal bureaucracy and had frequent contact with the nobility of the rest of Europe. Therefore, they pressed their sons to live up to the

43 Adele Petigru Allston to Benjamin Allston, 3 January 1849, Robert F. W. Allston Papers, SCHS.
44 After graduating from West Point in 1853, Benjamin Allston stayed in the army for four years, returned to follow once more his father’s footsteps becoming a rice planter, but was called into the Confederate Army and fought in the Civil War. After his return, he failed at a second attempt to establish himself as a rice planter; disappointed, he devoted himself to religious life and became an Episcopal minister. See Easterby, The South Carolina Rice Plantation, 14.
45 See Macry, Ottocento, 5-81; according to Macry, “the strong link between surname and family patrimony begins under the feudal system ... and becomes, in time, a strategic element in the preservation of a status which relates ... [the noble] social identity and source of income to large landholding.” (24).
international reputation of their family name. Nicola Maresca (1790-1870), for example, descended from a prominent noble family of the region around Naples. His father Antonino Maresca (1750-1822) was the Neapolitan King’s minister at the Russian court; his mother was Anna Wiasenski, a Russian princess. 46 Continuing the family tradition, Nicola was going to be an ambassador of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. He ought to be respected by every other diplomat in Europe because of his father’s credentials. If this did not happen, the honor of the family name of the Maresca would be diminished. Nicola was well aware of the importance of his performance and on its consequences for the family. 47

One of Nicola’s first diplomatic missions was at the 1815 Congress of Vienna, where he was one of the signers of the treaties that ratified the return of the Bourbon King Ferdinand IV and the creation of the “Holy Alliance” between the reactionary powers of post-Napoleonic Europe. In that occasion, Nicola was frustrated by the other diplomats’ disrespectful behavior and he wrote to his father, “I am one of the King’s Ministers, and not just a young man to despise”. Then, he acknowledged his father’s respected position by saying “I beg you to talk to the clerks in the chancery ... I think that in the letters sent to me they should write my title of Assistant Minister ... [rather than] just ‘To the Duke Don Nicola Maresca of Serracapriola’ ... all this [his diplomatic mission] if I were not your son, would be constantly a reason for suspecting me.” 48

In Nicola Maresca’s case, his behavior as a diplomat in the European courts would have had an obvious influence on the overall image of the Maresca family and on the honor of the family name. However, the real issue at stake was the fact

46 The Maresca were Dukes of Serracapriola, near Sorrento, on the Neapolitan Coast; they had been Dukes since the early eighteenth century and they had been traditionally close to the Bourbon dynasty, working their way up covering important positions in the kingdom’s administration. Besides serving as minister of the king Ferdinand IV in Russia, Antonino Maresca, who was the second Duke in the line of succession, also worked as the Neapolitan ambassador in Vienna; after his death, in 1822, Nicola Maresca became the third Duke of Serracapriola. For more information on the Maresca family, see V. Spreti, Enciclopedia storico-nobiliare italiana (Milan, 1928); and F. Bonazzi, Famiglie nobili (Naples, 1902).
47 Following his father’s footsteps, Nicola Maresca had started his career quite early; he entered the world of international diplomacy in 1811, when he was just 21, as assistant minister of the Neapolitan kingdom at the Court of the Russian emperor Alexander I, in St. Petersburg.
48 Nicola Maresca to Antonino Maresca, 3/15 March 1816, Maresca Family Papers, ASN.
that Nicola’s father expected him to follow in his footsteps and to take over where he had left off, making himself and his family’s name as respected as they were during Antonino’s years of diplomatic activity. Nicola knew that his chance of gaining a recognition equal to the one his father had was linked to his close study and repetition of Antonino’s behavior in international diplomatic settings. Nicola worshipped Antonino, respected him, and loved him as a son ought to do with his patriarchal father, but at the same time he probably envied him and wished he was as successful as him in keeping high the honor of the family name; to achieve this aim he had to follow a set of unwritten, but codified, rules of conduct, the first of which was to obey his father. 49

Certainly, in both souths, patriarchal families were concerned with the respect due by society to aristocratic clans. This was part of an honor system according to which honorable men were first and foremost men who were heads of families belonging to the landowning elite. Patriarchal families were centered around the figure of the father, and the father was first and foremost the main bearer of the family name. At his death, his sons would have been the successors of the family tradition and the main bearers of the family name as well. The behavior of the sons had to be in accordance with the unwritten rules of aristocratic dignity in order to deserve the same respect that was due to the family name.

The importance of the family name was linked to the claim to specific lands that a family could make from generation to generation. To be able to add to the family name the indication of the place where the family had originally owned properties — such as in “Lanza di Trabia” or “Hammonds of Redcliffe” — meant to be

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49 Nicola closed his letter saying “I proclaim myself your most obedient and affectionate son for life” (Nicola Maresca to Antonino Maresca, 3/15 March 1816, Maresca Family Papers, ASN). Following his return in Naples, Nicola Maresca married Margherita De Sangro (1798-1874), daughter of the Duke Nicola De Sangro, in 1817. After the Revolution of 1820, the Maresca fell in disgrace with the king and Nicola did not have other diplomatic tasks; in 1839, the new king Ferdinand II restored Nicola’s former privileges and sent him as ambassador to Paris. Apart from a brief period as prime minister during the Revolution of 1848, Nicola continued to cover important diplomatic positions throughout the 1840s and 1850s; he continued to be loyal to the Bourbon kingdom even after its fall in 1861 and he died in Naples in 1870. See C. Di Somma and G. Fiorentino, “Cenni biografici” in G. Fiorentino, ed., Ricordi napoletani: uomini, scene, tradizioni antiche, 1850-1920 (Naples: Electa,
acknowledged as part of a class of established landowners. Therefore, in both
souths, preserving the original family properties was a crucial matter in the minds
of patriarchal landowners. For this reason, although in the American South laws
concerning the elder sons' rights to family's properties -- like the southern Italian
maggiorascato -- had been abolished, the "logic of the surname" and the integrity
of the family estates related to it was a central concern of patriarchal landowners of
both souths. 50

The strict link between ownership of land and recognition of the family's rights to
high social standing suggests that the views that patriarchs of both souths held
about social relations on the family's estates and within the family were tightly
related. The stress on deference and obedience, which inevitably brought
detachment between fathers and sons, also characterized relations between masters
and laborers in the countryside. Detachment was increased by the fact that
patriarchal masters delegated to stewards and overseers the management of their
lands. This was due partly to the fact that the wealthiest families of both souths
owned several estates, and partly to the fact that the practice of absenteeism was
widespread among the oldest sections of the two landed aristocracies.

Delegation of management of the estates to stewards and overseers increased the

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50 The link between honor of the family name, patriarchy, and landholding was particularly evident
in the case of aristocratic families with a long military tradition. In this case, every generation or
every two generations a patriarch/head of the household could be expected to be also an outstanding
general on the battlefield. No career showed better than the military the aristocratic obsession for
being able to defend the honor of the family name by fighting for the land of the ancestors. For
example, both Virginian Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) and Sicilian Vincenzo Ruffo, Prince of Scaletta
(1808-1889), descended from propertied families of the highest aristocratic rank with an illustrious
military past. Robert E. Lee was the son of George Washington's famous cavalry commander "Light
Horse Harry" Lee, while Vincenzo Ruffo was the son of general Antonio Ruffo, minister of war
under Francis I. Both Robert E. Lee and Vincenzo Ruffo attended prestigious military academies,
West Point and La Nunziatella, and went on to become famous military leaders; while Robert E. Lee
eventually was appointed commander-in-chief of the Confederate army, Vincenzo Ruffo became
commander of the king's personal bodyguards. On the link between honor, aristocratic patriarchy,
and military tradition in the American South, see Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 191-192; on the
Italian South, where the honor of the highest military ranks was linked to the aristocratic families' proxi
ty to the king, see Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 4-5. On Robert E. Lee, see E. Thomas,
Robert E. Lee: A Biography (New York: Norton, 1995); on Vincenzo Ruffo, see Di Somma and
Fiorentino, "Cenni biografici".
distance and detachment between masters and laborers to the point that it created two mutually distinct and separate worlds. Patriarchal planters and noblemen were neither interested in having contact with their laborers nor in having to deal with the problems related to the management of workers’ activities. However, their reliance on stewards and overseers produced a chronic problem of finding individuals suitable for such difficult jobs. In both souths, patriarchal landowners also had the option of employing either their sons, in order to prepare them for the future management of the family estates, or other members of the family. Most of the time, however, they recruited administrative personnel from the yeomanry in the American South and from the landed peasantry in the Italian South. 51

The correspondence between Richard Baylor (1803-1862) and his cousin Thomas Gregory Baylor (1815-1864) illustrates some of the problems related to patriarchal ideas of management. In 1855, Thomas Gregory Baylor acted as administrator of his cousin’s estate at “Sandy Point”, Virginia. 52 It is clear from the exchanges they had that Richard Baylor wanted a manager capable of directing the overseer, Mr. Lipscomb, in having a firm hand with the slaves and that Thomas Gregory Baylor was unable to do so. Addressing him “Sir”, Thomas Gregory Baylor wrote to his cousin: “I had a most serious charge made against Mr. Lipscomb today by one of the servants .... The negro says he told Mr. L. he would kill him if he ever caught

51 For a useful summary of the main issues regarding the hierarchy of management of large plantations, see P. Kolchin, American Slavery, 1619-1877 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993), 102-105. Kolchin writes that, increasingly in the nineteenth century, overseers “belonged to a professional group who made their careers managing plantations” (103); in spite of this “dissatisfaction for the performance of overseers was rampant” and “the overseer problem was very real for wealthy planters”, meaning the planters who were most likely to be absentee owners (104). See also J. W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 271-277. According to Giovanni Montroni a similar professional ethos characterized some of the administrators of the landed estates of absentee noblemen in southern Italy; see Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 91-93. However, unlike the American case, in the Mezzogiorno, the representatives of the landowners were likely to be chosen among “those categories of people who enjoyed prestige and authority in the local communities” (92). In spite of this, dissatisfaction over the administrators’ behavior was by no means exceptional among southern Italian noblemen; for a particular case study, see M. Armiero, “Tra proprietari e proprietà: gli agenti locali della famiglia Riario Sforza”, Meridiana 20 (1994).

52 The Baylors were originally from Essex County, Virginia, where Richard Baylor had acquired the “Kinloch” estate in in the 1840s; in the 1850s, Baylor acquired also “Sandy Point”, in Charles City
him engaged thus again; several complaints of a similar character have reached me in the past 6 months, but you said I had no business to listen to negro lies.” 53 In subsequent letters, Thomas Gregory Baylor blamed Mr. Lipscomb’s inability to control the workers for the fact that the situation was getting out of control, in spite of several threats of violence: “I have avoided all conflicts with Mr. Lipscomb, though I have grounds to begin upon ... Mr. Lipscomb upon taking the reins told the negroes not to come to my house or he would flog them and soon after some one attempted to break my Big House, and I told them whilst they were at the smokehouse putting away meat that I meant to shoot the firsts that put their feet into my yard after night.” 54

Two years later, one of Richard Baylor’s slaves, John Washington, escaped from Sandy Point and arrived at Thomas Gregory Baylor’s house at Petersburg. Thomas Gregory Baylor asked his cousin to come and take him away, but he received no answer, so he kept Washington with him for a while, putting him to work. Meanwhile, the slave told him that the reason for his escape was that “he would not live any longer with Mr. Lipscomb ... he says that besides the fact that Mr. Lipscomb gives his wife and daughter no peace, he is otherwise persecuted by Lipscomb ... Mr. L. could not take too much authority over him and make him do as he pleased ... John tells me they had him whipped for stealing a hog. I would much sooner have suspected L. than John from the knowledge I have of the two men.” 55 A week passed and Richard Baylor did not answer; Mr. Lipscomb, then, went to Petersburg to find John, but the slave had already fled from there. 56

Clearly, Mr. Lipscomb was not well suited for the job of overseer and Thomas Gregory Baylor reported both his complaints as administrator and the complaints of the slaves about him, but Richard Baylor never changed his attitude toward the management of his estate. The original copy of the agreement made in January——

53 Thomas Gregory Baylor to Richard Baylor, 16 December 1855, Baylor Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (from now on VHS).
54 Thomas Gregory Baylor to Richard Baylor, 23 February 1856, Baylor Family Papers, VHS.
55 Thomas Gregory Baylor to Richard Baylor, 7 July 1858, Baylor Family Papers, VHS.
56 Thomas Gregory Baylor to Richard Baylor, 14 July 1858, Baylor Family Papers, VHS.
1855 between Richard Baylor and Mr. Lepscomb said that "he [the overseer] will faithfully, honestly and diligently apply himself and perform all the duties of a manager or overseer ... and faithfully obey all the reasonable wishes and commands of the said Richard Baylor". However, the letter to which this document was attached shows that by November of the same year Mr. Lipscomb was complaining -- significantly in very poor written English -- both about the pay and the fact that he needed an assistant in order to do his job properly. Richard Baylor agreed, more to get rid of any cause of trouble with Mr. Lipscomb and with his slaves than for any other reason. Acting as a typical patriarchal planter, Baylor wanted to have little to do with problems related to the management of his work force. He deferred these problems to his administrator and his overseer, but his reliance on them created more problems than he could handle in the relations between them and the slaves.

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57 Terms of Agreement attached to Thomas P. Lipscomb to Richard Baylor, 6 November 1855, Baylor Family Papers, VHS. These terms of agreement may seem very general, but it is fair to say that several planters considered it useless to write detailed contracts with clearly stated clauses which practically had very little value if the overseers did not intend to keep their promises. This is the case of the terms of agreement between Elizabeth Allston Blythe, Robert Allston's aunt, and overseer William T. Thompson. Apparently, Blythe did not trust Thompson and wrote a very simple contract which bound him to oversee two of her rice plantations in 1822. Thompson did not keep his written promises and violated "the clause forbidding him to keep for himself more than two cows and two calves"; see Easterby, The South Carolina Rice Plantation, 24. More elaborate types of overseer contract were similar to the famous "Rules on the Rice Estate of P.C. Weston, South Carolina, 1846", De Bow's Review 21 (1857), reprinted in U. B. Phillips, ed., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, Vol. I: Plantation and Frontier (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1910), 115-122; however, they were very uncommon and mainly written for publishing purposes.

58 The basic duties of the overseers were the same on every plantation: they included taking care of the food provisions and the labor force. At the very least, overseers had to periodically inspect the food to prevent stealing and keep the discipline among the slaves using the whip when necessary. However, even if they were better than Mr. Lipscomb at doing their job, overseers working on absentee-owned plantations must have felt additional pressure because they were left completely in charge of all the task related to plantation management by the planter; they were effectively representing the authority of a distant patriarch and, as such, they had to be skilled enough to "judge over the wrongdoing of the slaves" with very little or no advice from him. See J. S. Bassett, "The Duties of the Overseer", in J.S. Bassett, ed., The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in His Letters (Northampton: Smith College, 1925), 15-16. There is a large literature on the problems of overseers and plantation management in the antebellum South. See the collection of documents in J. O. Breeden, ed., Advice among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980); and W. K. Scarborough, The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana state University Press, 1966).
The attitude exemplified by the case of Richard Baylor, so typical of absentee patriarchal planters, was mirrored by the carelessness shown by the southern Italian nobility, equally characterized by absentee ownership, toward its latifondi. Most southern Italian nobles had general administrators who took care of their family estates. The correspondence between Filippo Muscianisi and Michele Spadafora, Marquis of Policastro, is a typical example of an exchange between administrator and landlord in southern Italy. Filippo Muscianisi managed the landed estate of the Spadafora, an important noble family, at Spadafora S. Pietro in Sicily throughout the 1850s. 59 His letters addressed the Marquis of Policastro as “Very Honored Marquis” and informed him of the conditions of the grape crop and of the process of olive oil making. Interestingly enough, Muscianisi often complained about the absence of reply from the Marquis. After one of the many periods of obstinate silence from the Marquis, Muscianisi wrote: “I am extremely worried because I have not received a letter from you with the last mail”. 60 Although Muscianisi tried to disguise the real reasons for his worries, in a Post Scriptum he explained that there were problems regarding the pay to give to the tenants (coloni) for the amount of olives they had collected. He asked for instructions because the tenants did not intend to respect the new dispositions, which they considered unfair, and they preferred to continue to agree to the previous contract (patto colonico). In a previous letter, Muscianisi had hinted that problems might arise from the different views held by the administrator and by the tenants on how their work should be remunerated. Significantly, soon after Muscinisi praised the firm hand of the head of the field-guards (campieri): “For your knowledge, I wish to let you know that the campiere Todaro from San Domenico [another family estate located nearby] has so far been very strong in carrying out his duty, and there is nothing wrong to say about him”. 61

59 Originally Princes of Maletto, the Spadafora had founded Spadafora S. Pietro in the early eighteenth century; they were one of the oldest and wealthiest aristocratic families of Messina and they extensive latifondi in northeastern Sicily. Don Michele Spadafora, Marquis of Policastro, was the brother of the Prince of Spadafora, Muzio Spadafora Montalto.

60 Filippo Muscianisi to Michele Spadafora, 26 November 1855, Spadafora Family Papers, Archivio di Stato di Palermo (from now on, ASP).

61 Filippo Muscianisi to Michele Spadafora, 17 September 1855, Spadafora Family Papers, ASP.
Clearly the figure of the campiere in the administration of patriarchal family estates was crucial, since he helped keep tight control over the workforce, especially in cases of labor protest, like the one just mentioned. As in the American South, the patriarchal landowner left the resolution of problems related to labor management to the administrator and the overseer. By constantly delaying his written replies, he made clear his wish to remain detached from the laborers under his control. On a few occasions, the campiere himself wrote to the Marquis of Policastro, letting him know his views on the administration. Acting according to a familiar pattern, he usually tried to free himself from any accusation by blaming the administrator for poor management of the workforce and for any damage to the landowners’ properties that might have occurred. In a letter sent from the family estate of San Domenico, the campiere Giuseppe Milici, addressed the Marquis as “Excellence” and “Master” and called himself “an old servant of his”. Then, he wrote “Modesty forbids me to speak, but, because of my loyalty, care, and assistance to the interests of Your Excellence, who provides for my living and to whom I have to obey, I must assure you, on my conscience, that no tenant, out of the old and natural subjects of Your Excellence ... has ever damaged either an olive tree or any other property of Your Excellence that have been put under my guard.”

62 The Marquis’ reply to this and to the other letters sent by Giuseppe Milici never arrived. The patriarchal nobleman demanded deference from both his subjects and his campiere, but he could not be bothered with their problems. 63

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62 Giuseppe Milici to Michele Spadafora, 24 October 1845, Spadafora Family Papers, ASP.
63 According to Anton Blok, the Sicilian campieri were armed field-guards “on horseback who watched over the fields, crops, and animals ... [and] had a reputation for toughness ... The campieri constituted a kind of private police force which, in the absence of an efficient formal control apparatus, claimed to maintain law and order in the countryside”; see Blok, The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 61. An interesting document on the importance of the campieri in the administration of the latifondo is in a series of letters written by Mario Cristofano, Administrator of the Calabrian estate of Bulgarano, to the Prince of Linguaglossa, Silvio Bonanno, in 1835. Apparently, Some of the coloni in Bulgarano, who were both starving and badly payed, were in the habit of robbing the Prince’s estate of its wheat and barley provisions. Cristofano wrote to the Prince that he had resolved to settle the question by “putting together with Turrisi [the sopristante, or overseer] during harvesting time ... two more, or even three horseback campieri, who would patrol the threshing floors in the night, causing some terror” (Mario Cristofano to the Prince of Linguaglossa, 29 May 1835, Linguaglossa Family Papers, ASP). However, this measure turned out to be insufficient and, less than two months later, Cristofano informed the Prince that he had decided “to replace ... [as head of the field-guards] a certain Don Gaetano Di Maura, a very honorable person, knowledgeable about the countryside and
Unlike slaves in the American South, who could only escape work exploitation and physical abuse by running away, southern Italian tenants could try to make themselves heard by sending petitions (suppliche) to the landowners. It did not happen very often. Only in a few exceptional instances, did tenants write directly to the Marquis. One of the letters was written by the tenant Francesco Calapriste, but it was intended as a collective letter that addressed the problem of poor administration and work exploitation on the estate where Giuseppe Milici was overseer. Although writing in very poor Italian, Francesco Calapriste managed to make sufficiently clear the abuse that the tenants had suffered because of the overseer and the subsequent intervention of the administrator to put things at rest: “Excellence, we can see that the hand of the Lord reached us through your administrator, who saw the principle that us tenants can have what our efforts deserve and that we cannot be robbed”. As with the overseer, the Marquis never replied, making clear that the tenants’ problems were none of his business. As in the American South, absentee landownership brought to detachment of the masters’ world from the laborers’ world and to workers’ exploitation as a consequence of bad management. Under the patriarchal system, administrators and overseers felt very little control over them in the landed estates. The distance of the landowners’ authority, therefore, only increased the likelihood that problems in the relations between them and the laborers would continue to occur.

used to handle all kinds of arms” (Mario Cristofano to the Prince of Linguaglossa, 15 July 1835, Linguaglossa Family Papers, ASP). This exchange shows that the threat of violence was absolutely crucial to maintain law and order on the patriarchal landed estates of the Mezzogiorno, given the fact that patriarchal noblemen were absentee landlords. As in the American South, absentee landownership created a chronic problem of discipline of the labor force. The nobleman’s administrators, like Cristofano, could only hope to resolve the problem implementing a strategy of tighter control through the use of sovrastanti and campieri who were increasingly ruthless and therefore able to inspire fear and make themselves respected.

The suppliche were appeals to the Princes against abuse of power of administrators and overseers in the conduction of their landed estates.

For a critical contemporary account of the conditions of laborers on patriarchal landed estates in the Mezzogiorno, see C. De Cesare, Delle condizioni economiche e morali delle classi agricole (Naples, 1859), 73-77. Although De Cesare’s works really focuses on the Apulian latifondi, called masserie, his observations on peasants’ exploitation can be applied to the whole Italian South; De Cesare says that “the condition of the [agrarian] worker is poor and hard to live on” (75) and his pay is “not even enough for the daily bread”, let alone for his family (76). See also Demarco, Il crollo del
As an ideology, patriarchalism was really a vestige of the world of the eighteenth century in both souths. The deference and obedience which bound both children and wife to the patriarch/head of the household and submitted them to his authority were increasingly out of place in the nineteenth-century world. The rigidity of social roles, which aristocratic patriarchs considered fixed and immutable both within the households and on their landed estates, was increasingly challenged by the ideas of equality and reciprocity which were the offspring of nineteenth-century liberalism. At the same time, the kind of aristocratic disdain which caused patriarchal planters and patriarchal noblemen to put as much distance as possible between them and the laborers on their landed estates was increasingly at odds with the bourgeois values of the “age of capital”. 67 These values stressed the importance of rationalization of production through the implementation of direct management and contractual relations with the workforce on plantations and latifondi; as such, they posed a serious challenge to the economic and social ethos related to patriarchalism and questioned the strength of the adaptation of an eighteenth-century aristocratic ideology to the changing world of the nineteenth century.

On the Verge of a Social Frontier: Family, Paternalism, and Reciprocity

Several historians have noticed that, between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, patriarchal ideology underwent profound changes in both souths. 68 On one hand, family relations became more egalitarian

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67 This is the definition given by Eric Hobsbawm to the central decades of the nineteenth century, which witnessed the triumph of bourgeois capitalism; see E. J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).

68 Among them, Philip Morgan, Rhys Isaac, Peter Bardaglio, and Willie Lee Rose for the American South, and Valeria Del Vasto, Marzio Barbagli, Paolo Macry, and Aurelio Lepre for the Italian Mezzogiorno.
and sentimental, as opposed to authoritarian; on the other hand, relations between masters and workers became characterized by a more humanitarian approach. The new ethos -- which came to be called paternalism -- implied reciprocity in the interaction between the father/master and his subjects both within and without the family walls. Fathers had relations with their wives and children based on the recognition of their needs and on reciprocal trust and affection. Masters had contractual relations with their workers, based on recognition of reciprocal rights and duties to observe. 69

In the nineteenth century, this new kind of ideology and way of life, based on contractual reciprocity rather than implicit recognition of authority, was increasingly common among many prominent families of the elites of the two souths. Most of these families came from the newly formed sections of the two aristocracies, from the wheat and cotton planters in the American South and from the recently ennobled bourgeoisie in the Italian South. American progressive planters and southern Italian progressive noblemen shared a similar disdain for deference and hierarchy and, at the same time, had similar concerns about the effectiveness of their workforce and the productivity of their landed estates. 70


70 Compare the treatment of paternalism in R. W. Fogel and S. L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (New York: Norton, 1974), 73-77, and the parallel treatment of southern Italian latifondismo in M. Petronevicz, Latifundium: Moral Economy and Material Life in a Nineteenth-Century Periphery (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 3-5. According to Fogel and Engerman, “Paternalism is not intrinsically antagonistic to capitalist enterprise ... [it] may actually raise profits by inducing labor to be more efficient than it would have been under a less benevolent management. There is no reason to rule out the possibility that paternalism operated this way for slaveowners” (73). Petronevicz links directly her study of southern Italian latifondismo as a “rational and efficient system of production and a stable and livable form of social organization” to Fogel and Engerman’s work as a representative of “such systems in the peripheral areas of the world economy, especially outside Europe” (4). Both Time on the Cross and Latifundium have been
The goal of paternalistic ideology was the acceptance of the social order through recognition of the duties of fathers toward their wives and children and, by extension, of the upper classes toward the lower classes. Consequently, a certain degree of affection characterized the relations between paternalist fathers and their wives and children, while a kind of masked benevolence characterized the relations between paternalist landowners and workers on their landed estates. 71

Within the family walls, the shift from patriarchalism to paternalism was linked to the concept of a more affectionate and intimate nuclear family in both souths. The emphasis of the new family was on feelings and on emotional relationships, rather than on authority and fixed roles. It is worth quoting Tocqueville’s Democracy in America, again:

In a democratic family the father exercises no other power than that which is granted to the affection and the experience of the age; his orders would perhaps be disobeyed, but his advice is for the most part authoritative ... In democratic countries ... the language addressed by a son to his father is always marked by mingled freedom, familiarity, and affection, which at once show that new relations have sprung up in the bosom of the family ... Under democratic laws, all the children are perfectly equal ... as no peculiar privileges distinguishes or divides them. 72

What Tocqueville was really describing here was the new model of an affectionate and egalitarian family based on reciprocity between fathers and children and on mutual agreement on the boundaries of interaction between the two. This was particularly clear in the family letters, which, according to Tocqueville, showed very little sign of the formality which characterized aristocratic families. 73

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71 The obvious reference here is Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, especially 3-7; Genovese says that “southern paternalism, like every other paternalism ... grew out of the necessity to discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation. It encouraged kindness and affection, but it simultaneously encouraged cruelty and hatred” (4).

72 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Part II, 195-197.

73 The shift to a more affectionate family has been the subject of numerous studies in the American
In the American South, paternalistic planters talked about “our family, white and black” and discussed their duties and obligations toward the members of the family, which included both children and slaves. This attitude was at the heart of the so-called “pro-slavery argument”, according to which slavery was justified as an obligation of masters to care for their unfree workers. In reality, the fact that paternalistic attitudes characterized mostly progressive and newer sections of the landed elites meant that planters tried to have a more efficient workforce by resorting more to non-violent means than to dehumanization. In doing so, progressive planters acted in a fashion similar to that of many other newly formed nineteenth-century elites. They tried to maximize the profit of their enterprises by establishing some kind of contractual relation with their workforce, basing it on the idea of the existence of reciprocal rights and duties.75


75 This interpretation falls along the lines of recent attempts at reconciling Genovese’s Marxist interpretation of the masters’ paternalistic ideology with studies by James Oakes and others scholars that indicate the existence of a clear capitalist behavior among the majority of slaveholders. In his recent study on time and plantation management in the antebellum South, Mark Smith has demonstrated that “planters could embrace very modern, even capitalistic methods for managing slave labor in an effort to modernize the Old South in their own terms – to embrace capitalism without its democratic connotations”; according to Smith, capitalist and precapitalist aspects of southern society were not mutually exclusive, but rather they existed side by side. See Smith, Debating Slavery, 93; see also his larger work, Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996). For an earlier attempt at reconciling the two positions, see Wallerstein, “American Slavery and the Capitalist World-Economy”, especially 211-221. Genovese’s treatment of southern paternalism as the distinctive ideology of the master class antithetic to capitalism is in Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 661-663, E. D. Genovese, In Red and Black: Marxist Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History
In the Italian South, paternalistic noblemen and ennobled bourgeois never had a complex ideological tradition like the one that characterized paternalist American planters. However, their private documents reveal that they treated children and workers with a comparable kind of care and, by doing this, implicitly recognized their duties and obligations towards them. Southern Italian progressive noblemen shared with American planters — and with many other elites of the western world — the paternalistic attitudes of the upper classes toward the lower classes, which were a typical product of the nineteenth century. Like southern planters, they strove to achieve the ideal of having rational and profit-making enterprises through collaboration between masters and workers.76

In both cases, the difference between the paternalistic ideal and the harsh reality of the exploitation of the workers was great. Slaves and peasants benefited only in few cases from the shift from patriarchal authority to paternalistic benevolence. They continued to be exploited in different ways and in different degrees, only in a less open and outspoken fashion. Although to a certain degree laborers had space to

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76 This is the main argument advanced by Marta Petrushewicz in “Land Based Modernization and the Culture of Landed Elites in the Nineteenth-Century Mezzogiorno”, paper delivered at the Commonwealth Fund Conference “Two Souths: Toward an Agenda for Comparative Study of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno”, University College London, January 1999; Petrushewicz contends that the interest of progressive southern Italian landowners for rationalization of production on the latifondi was part of a general tendency toward modernization among nineteenth-century European landed elites. This interest was linked to the elites’ effort at guaranteeing stability in the management of the landed estates through practices that emphasized the contractual character of the relation with the work force; see Petrushewicz, Latifondo, 10-16. However, similar to what Mark Smith concludes about the mixed capitalis-non capitalist character of American plantations, Petrushewicz points out that “latifondismo was neither feudal nor capitalist; it was a mixture ... of subsistence and market-oriented production ... of modern management combined with sharecropping and land assignments”; see M. Petrushewicz, “The Demise of Latifondismo” in R. Lumley and J. Morris, eds., The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997), 21. See also S. Lupo, “I proprietari terrieri del Mezzogiorno” in P. Bevilacqua, ed., Storia dell’agricoltura italiana in età moderna e contemporanea. Vol. II: Uomini e Classi (Venice. Marsilio, 1990), 112-119; and Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 85-93, in which the author makes an interesting comparison between latifondi owned by progressive southern Italian landowners and English agricultural enterprises owned by “gentlemen capitalists”.
manoeuvre in bargaining with their masters, slaves and peasants were not part of wholly capitalist systems; their attempts to benefit from paternalistic ideology crashed against the will and authority of planters and noblemen, who had far more power in their hands than any true capitalist businessman of their time, and who used this power to extract surplus labor and discourage any form of resistance.

Paternalistic planters showed their sons they had confidence in them and that they trusted their sense of responsibility and duty. Since relations between parents and children increasingly were based on reciprocity rather than on authority, fathers advised their sons on how to behave in life rather than expecting them to automatically adhere to their own standards. Consequently, paternalistic planters had a much closer and affectionate relation with their children and they wrote letters to them far more often than patriarchal planters did.

These points are well illustrated in the correspondence between Thomas Lanier Spragins and his sons Fayette and Thomas. A progressive planter from Virginia, Spragins wrote numerous letters to his sons, who were studying at Princeton University between 1837 and 1839. Their exchanges show that their relationship

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78 On relations between parents and children in the paternalistic family, see Rose, Victorian America and the Civil War, 168-169; on affectionate relations between parents and children in the planters' families, see Censer, North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 20-65. On the importance of regular correspondence as a sign of affection among members of the planter's household, see W. Wates, "Precursor to the Victorian Age: The Concept of Marriage and Family as Revealed in the Correspondence of the Izard Family of South Carolina" in C. Bleser, ed., In Joy and in Sorrow: a significant collection of letters of a planter family in coastal Georgia is in R. M. Myers, ed., The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). See also J. E. Cashin, "The Structure of Antebellum Planter Families: 'The Ties that Bound Us Was Strong'", Journal of Southern History 56:1 (1990); Cashin contends that the planters' affectionate relations extended beyond the nuclear family and included, together with parents and children, also "aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins" (56).

79 Thomas Lanier Spragins (1789-1863) was an influential planter from Halifax County; he owned
was relatively informal and based on mutual trust. Typically, Thomas Lanier Spragins’ letters started by addressing his sons “Dear sons” and by saying how interested and delighted he had been in reading their last letter and how much he looked forward to receiving the next. 80

In one particular letter, Spragins spelled out very clearly the idea of reciprocity in family life. He wrote: “My sons ... recollect that your opportunities have and will be good for improvement and distinction; your friends have a right to expect much of you. ‘When much is given much is required’” Paternalistic family relations were based on mutual agreement between fathers and sons on the nature of their reciprocal duties and how these had to be fulfilled. In return for the educational opportunities their father gave them, Spragins’ sons had to fulfil their moral obligations by honoring the family with high grades at school. In the same letter, Spragins talked about his ideas on education, giving advice to his sons: “You have now arrived to an age and a crisis at which it requires great moral courage and extraordinary fortitude to sustain you in a correct course in the devious path of life ... the force of example is very great and the force of habit is more so, hence the importance of correct habit in early life”. He then went on to discuss the effects of a son’s poor behaviour and how this led to his father’s displeasure because it broke the bond of reciprocal moral obligation: “How painful must be to a tender parent to have sons at school spending the hard earnings of their affectionate father in idleness and dissipation; a reverse of conduct how pleasing and delightful.” 81

Spragins repeatedly advised his sons on how to control their habits and not...
indulge in dissipation and idleness. He always made the point that they should conduct their lives in such a way that they would be able to fulfill their moral obligations toward their "tender parent". He wrote to his four sons separately in order to be absolutely clear on this. In a letter to Leonidas, his youngest son living at the family estate in Rockingham, Virginia, Spragins wrote "my son, be exemplary in all of your conduct, permit not the immoral and wicked boys to lead you astray, but be studious and pursue the path of rectitude and do nothing which you will afterwards be ashamed of, keep good company and recollect the old adage 'evil communication corrupts good manners'". Morality was a central concern of paternalistic planters. Since what bound together father and son was not the authority and power of one over the other, it was up to the good sense of the son to adhere to the moral standard of his father. The father's advice sought to prompt the son to reflect upon the need to maintain a high moral standard in order to reciprocate his parent's moral obligation toward him and preserve the honor of the family.

The planters' adoption of the paternalistic ethos had particularly far-reaching consequences in the gender relations within the household: even though women continued to be subordinate to men in society, and especially so in legal matters, ideas of reciprocity and mutual understanding came to characterize the relations between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and fathers and daughters. Numerous diaries and letters written by plantation mistresses show that they could

82Thomas Spragins to Leonidas Spragins, 19 September 1839, Spragins Family Papers, VHS.
83The best treatment of the influence of the children's education abroad on the family relations in the plantation household is in S. Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Rituals in the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 128-159; Stowe contends that paternalistic families were only partly characterized by affectionate relations and that, while children wrote of experiences of "intimacy, an enjoyment of emotional closeness" in the closed society of the college, "parents consistently relied upon themes of authority, stressing the academy as means to moral ends and practical achievements" (154-155). According to Jane Turner Censer, this meant that "planters did not mindlessly relinquish power. Rather they came to express authority differently", as part of a reciprocal exchange; if children showed that they had received and internalized parental values of hard work and self control, "planters would be willing to pay more attention to offspring's wishes." Then, "a blend of respect ... and affection characterized parent-child interaction in planter families", as the case of the Spragins shows; see Censer, North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 60-64.
share intimacy and affection with the paternalistic planters/heads of the household to an extent unknown before. The kind of “beneficent paternalism of the fathers”, which masked male dominance in social relations, was expressed in the family in the acquiescence of the husbands to share feelings with their wives, in the willingness of the brothers to communicate with their sisters, and in the eagerness of the fathers to listen to their daughters.⁸⁴

The relation between fathers and daughters was particularly delicate to handle under the paternalistic ethos; it was no longer simply a matter of the latter obeying the rules set by the former, as in the patriarchal households. The contractual idea of the family implied that fathers had toward their daughters obligations and duties similar to the ones they had toward their sons. Paternalistic planters were conscious of the fact that respect of reciprocal obligations led to an equal treatment of both sons and daughters; consequently, they made all possible efforts to give equal importance to their children’s feelings and wishes, at the same time giving particular attention to their daughters’ need of affection.⁸⁵

Within the family, beneficent paternalism meant primarily a manipulation of feelings to shift the focus from the real issue of power unbalance in the household. By satisfying their daughters’ need of affection, rather than imposing their will upon them, paternalistic planters managed to mask the fact that they were still under their authority and that they had very little room for independent action within the family. From the time they moved their first steps to the time they started being courted and finally got married, the daughters of paternalistic planters were strictly under the control of the father/head of the household. It was a subtle kind of

⁸⁴ For a detailed treatment of gender relations and the conditions of women in the paternalistic planters’ household, see Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 100-145, and 192-241; according to Fox-Genovese, “the beneficent paternalism of the father was ever overshadowed by the power of the master, just as the power of the master was tempered by the beneficent paternalism of the father” (101).

⁸⁵ See Steven Stowe’s study of correspondence between planters and their children in Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 142-153; Stowe found out that parents “encouraged both sons and daughters” to write them often; however, letters of paternalistic planters to their daughters focused on their children’s emotional fulfilling “in an intimate fashion most parents did not use with boys”. (148). For example, talking about her daughter Elizabeth’s feelings, South Carolinian planter John Richardson wrote “Yes! My Dear Girl! These are subjects that can never become uninteresting or viewed with indifference by your tender Father”; see John P. Richardson to Elizabeth Richardson, 9 March 1809,
control, focused on the psychological effects of the discourse of reciprocity, as in the case of the relation between fathers and sons. The main idea was that, in return for their father's care and respect, which was manifested in listening to them and placing them at the same level of their brothers in the family's scale of affection, daughters had to follow a kind of behavior that stressed their will to accept the rules of a male-dominated society. What really regulated the relations between paternalistic planters and their daughters, therefore, was the particular type of expectations related to the female gender role in the white slaveholding society; according to these expectations, girls ought to be trained to become wives and mothers, since women were first and foremost the keepers of the household. 86

Illuminating in this respect, is the case of North Carolinian planter William Gaston and his eldest daughter Susan. 87 After the death of his third wife out of childbirth complications, Gaston had determined to raise his five children with the help of the two eldest of them, Susan and Alexander, whom he had sent to Philadelphia study. Whilst Susan was in Philadelphia, between 1822 and 1823, Gaston watched closely her education and tried to manipulate her through his friend Joseph Hopkinson, at whose house his daughter lived. Gaston had clear ideas on the kind of woman he wanted his daughter to become, and masked with fatherly

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86 See the classic study by N. F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), on the household as the “woman’s sphere” and the application of this theory to the antebellum South in Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household; see also Rose, Victorian America and the Civil War, 145-192. Even more than patriarchal planters, paternalistic planters managed to build a gender culture that emphasized the women’s role as wives and mothers and to justify it not much as part of a fixed and immutable social system, but rather as the proper “sphere” of women’s activity; a sphere in which they could find sentimental fulfillment and in which, in return for their acceptance of the male dominated social order, women would be protected “from threats posed by the slave system upon which white male power rested”; see D. G. Faust, “Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narrative of War” in Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 127. In this sense, daughters and wives of paternalistic planters were much more likely to accept an inequity in gender relations which they had come to rationalize as based on reciprocal rights and duties, and which were the reason for what Joan Cashin calls a “culture of resignation”; see J. Cashin, “Introduction: Culture of Resignation” in J. E. Cashin, ed., Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997). See also J. E. Friedman, The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), on the influence of both church and family in shaping women’s “culture of resignation”.

87 See Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 171-176.
attention his concern for her being able to fit her social role. In the words of historian Steven Stowe, “his thoughts on care for her easily expanded into suggestions on carefulness for the womanhood she embodied”; as time went on, Gaston increasingly “expressed his strict standards for her in such reasonable words of love and duty that their very impersonality became the mark of true parental care.”

After her return to her father house in Newbern, North Carolina, Susan became in charge of the raising of her younger brothers and sisters and responsible for the management of household slaves, almost as she was training to become a future plantation mistress; to be sure, by this time, in 1826, Susan’s idea of womanhood and her father’s idea of her social role as a woman coincided on several points. Soon, however, Susan started to be courted; she dutifully reported to her father about every marriage proposal. In his letters, William Gaston stressed the point that he was not going to control her, but rather that he offered her his parental advice, his “best counsel (when asked) and ... tenderest sympathy”.

When Susan finally became engaged to lawyer Robert Donaldson in 1827, she wrote her father about her wish to marry him. William Gaston sent Donaldson a letter in which he said that he approved of them being together; furthermore, in the same letter he also clarified the idea of reciprocal obligations and duties that lay at the heart of his paternalistic relation with his daughter. Gaston wrote to Donaldson:

> In consenting to the union with my child I feel that I am about to bestow a gift the value of which can know so well as myself. She has long been the pride, the joy, the solace of my heart. God grant that she may discharge the duties which she may owe to you with the same unequalled, inimitable excellence which has characterized her in the performance of those that were due to her Father!  

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88 Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 171, 173. The strict standards that Gaston had in mind for his daughter are revealed in a letter he sent to Hopkinson, in which he wrote that “when a girl sees much society her mind is liable to become dissipated ... and she is too apt to fancy herself a woman”; see William Gaston to Joseph Hopkinson, January 4, 1823, quoted in Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 172.

89 William Gaston to Susan Gaston, 2 October 1826, quoted in Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 174; Stowe notices that “in such way was the authority of the father clothed in loving selflessness” (174).

Gaston could not have been clearer on reciprocity; according to him, his relation with Susan had been characterized by her discharging her duties toward her father, duties that she owed to him in return for his affection and care. Gaston made clear that he expected the same thing to happen to Donaldson once her daughter married; Susan was to have similar reciprocal obligations with her husband in exchange for his providing for her welfare, protection, and emotional fulfillment. The fact that Gaston had written that Susan had been “the pride, the joy, the solace of ... my heart” was part of the sentimental language that characterized contractual family relations in a paternalistic family. It really meant that Susan had “discharged her duties” by understanding and making all possible efforts to fill her gender role of future wife, mother, and plantation mistress. 91 In her father’s eyes, this was Susan’s best quality, as it would have been the best quality of any daughter for any paternalistic parent; Gaston’s letter was an acknowledgement that he had been able to instill the idea of reciprocity into his daughter’s mind to such an extent that Donaldson did not have to worry about her fitting her gender role. At the same time, Susan’s embrace of the idea of reciprocity meant her implicit acceptance of her gender role in the planters’ male dominated society of the antebellum South and her resignation to accept the conventions and rules related to it. 92

Like American paternalistic planters, southern Italian paternalistic noblemen strove to have close relations with their sons and made great use of affectionate terms in their letters. As in the American South, reciprocity informed the daily life of paternalistic families. Fathers expected their children to return their affection and

91 In the words of Steven Stowe, Gaston’s “paternalism was marked by the tension between his desire to know his children and love them, and his efforts to bend personality to family position, family routine to abstract principles, and love to obligation”; Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 165.
92 See again Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 174-176; Stowe writes that, although Gaston “disclaims final authority in matters of Susan’s heart”, he asserts through the letter to Donaldson “his authority as nothing less than what was owed to truth” (175). On southern gender conventions, see Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household, 200-205; according to Fox-Genovese, “southerners borrowed from the interlocking discourses of companionate marriage, motherhood, and domesticity”, but above all, “they emphasized women’s obligation to manifest purity, chastity, and obedience, and to cultivate their special calling for motherhood” (202). See also M. F. Wiener, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 53-71.
made very clear the nature of their respective moral obligations. Whilst presenting
erselves as non authoritarian and benevolent parents, paternalistic noblemen
tried to make their sons aware of what they owed them in terms of respect and what
it meant to follow parental advice. 93

One of the more interesting examples of relationships between paternalistic
noblemen and their sons is the correspondence between Agostino Serra, Duke of
Terranova, and his adopted son, Luciano Brunas Serra. The Duke wrote more than a
letter per week to Luciano, who managed the family estate in Calabria, between
1837 and 1840. 94 His letters always opened with “My Dear Son” and had long
descriptions of the Duke’s ideas on his son’s proper behaviour and the expectations
he had. The Duke’s advice to Luciano was similar to Thomas Spragins’ advice to
his sons to behave themselves in order to not displease their parent, but at the same

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93 This interpretation refers to Marzio Barbagli’s description of the “intimate marriage” family – as
opposed to the patriarchal family – which was characterized by “a more flexible role system, less
related to gender and age, and in which the relations of authority were more balanced”; see Barbagli,
Sotto lo stesso tetto, 19. In sketching the characteristics of the liberal ideas behind the family law
applied in the Mezzogiorno in the 1860s, Paolo Macry writes that parents and children were
considered equal members of the household, though with different powers, and that in the modern
family “the authority of the father – whose task [was] to educate and direct – [was tempered] by the
mother’s affection; see Macry, Ottocento, 9. However, according to Giovanni Montroni, the
Mezzogiorno witnessed the appearance of a model of family relations that can only be described as
“egalitarian” between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; several letters written by southern
Italian noblemen show a high level of intimacy and affection together with a clear indication of the
importance of equal relations between members of the household. Montroni characterizes the tone,
both intimate and paternalistic, of some of the correspondence between noble fathers and their
children as “bourgeois”; see Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 37, 43-44.

94 Agostino Serra, Duke of Terranova, was the son of Giovanni Serra and Maria Antonia Grimaldi,
Princess of Gerace. He was the owner of extensive landholdings in Calabria, among which the estates
of Gioia and Cannava; on Cannava, in particular, the Serra were engaged in entrepreneurial activities,
since they were producing and commercializing olive oil in large quantities for the external market.
For this reason, the Serra estates in Calabria have long been seen as an example of capitalistic
enterprise in the nineteenth-century Mezzogiorno; see A. Sinisi, “Le aziende calabresi dei principi
Serra di Gerace nella prima metà del XIX secolo” in A. Massafr, ed., Problemi di Storia delle
Campagne meridionali, and M. Giorgio, “Produzione e commercio dell’olio nell’azienda calabrese
dei Serra di gerace (1836-1847)” in G. Montroni, ed., Agricoltura e commercio nel Mezzogiorno tra
‘700 e ‘800 (Naples: Liguori, 1996). Moreover, the Duke of Terranova showed unusual attention to
problems related to land and work management and was clearly favorable to implementing direct
control on his estate through his adopted son, Luciano Brunas Serra. According to Giovanni
Montroni, the Duke’s attention had a lot to do with his wish to “improve the systems of conduction
and cultivation” through the employment of modern agricultural techniques; see Montroni, Gli
uomini del Re, 79-85. In this sense, the Duke of Terranova, in spite of his noble origins, was certainly
a progressive landowner akin to the Barracco and other ennobled bourgeois, who brought the
capitalistic spirit of conduction and modernization of production in the management of the
nineteenth-century latifondo. The relation between the Duke of Terranova and his adopted son has
time they emphasized to a much greater degree the reciprocity between the two and the balance of their relationship. Repeatedly, the Duke asked Luciano to consider him a friend and to trust him because he did not try to impose his authority on him, but rather to help him through his guidance. In one letter, the Duke wrote: “I am not the kind of father who is jealous of his authority when I know that nobody acts to usurp it ... be sure that behaving always well with me ... I enjoy seeing together with the son’s affection and love, the friend’s trust, since I dispise that kind of servile respect”. 95 The proclaimed friendship between father and son established a bond of mutual moral obligations between the two that reinforced the relation of reciprocity. Friendship meant first and foremost reciprocal trust and willingness to tell each other the truth, no matter how painful: “when you talked to me about matters on which I did not share your feelings, nevertheless, I have never really scolded you for this, but rather, considering you more than a son, a friend, I have always told you the reason why I had a different opinion” 96 By asking his son to be his friend, the Duke made sure that he had his trust and that he would listen to his advice. In the end, the Duke’s advice tended to be that of a parent much more than that of a friend. “On the conduction of business, I won’t tell you anything”, he wrote. “You are cautious enough to behave well, and with the required kindness: make yourself loved, and at the same time show both firmness and shrewdness”. 97

The nature of the relation of reciprocity between the Duke and Luciano is particularly clear in the way he handled his son’s wish to get married. Instead of asking his son about the social standing and wealth of the future bride’s family, the Duke asked his son to consider the fact that his wife would have entered his family as a new daughter. The Duke made clear that he would have liked him to marry a woman who was sensible and who had proper family habits, regardless of the amount of wealth that she brought with her. He was not sure that the woman that

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95 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 27 December 1837, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
96 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 6 December 1837, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
97 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 25 November 1837, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
Luciano wanted to marry had these qualities and, therefore, he disapproved of his choice. However, he tried to balance his argument by pointing out that Luciano would have felt unhappy precisely because the woman he loved did not have the kind of qualities that the Duke sought. 98

In a long and detailed letter on the subject, the Duke wrote to his adopted son:

being a man, and not a boy, [you will be able] to act accordingly, in order to not sacrifice your peace, and mine as well. Regarding the business of getting married, I do not think about a bigger, or a smaller dowry, since Providence has placed us in a wealthy enough condition ... I would like to live the time that is left as much quiet as possible, and if you were not happy, I would not be either. 99

Since reciprocal relations in paternalistic families were based on mutual exchanges rather than authority, fathers could manifest their disapproval toward their sons’ choice of a bride only pointing out the discomfort that both father and son would feel if the choice were wrong. By saying that he would consider Luciano’s new wife as a daughter, the Duke reminded him of the relation of reciprocity between them. Luciano had to take into account his father’s opinion because of the mutual obligation binding the two together. Clearly, what was truly at stake in the wedding was the honor of the family name. The Duke did not wish his family to include a woman that would not act and speak according to their high standards. In order to discourage his son from his intention to marry without imposing his authority, he asked him to act according to his sense of duty toward the family. As in the case of Thomas Spragins, the Duke’s advice had the effect of making his son reflect upon the nature of the relation that bound the two and upon what was expected from him in terms of respect for the family bonds and the obligations toward his parent. 100

98 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 14 December 1839, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
99 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 14 December 1839, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
100 According to Montroni, the fact that the duke and his adopted son had such a close and affectionate relation did not necessarily mean that “sentimental reasons could prevail over elements like richness and status”; however, the Duke was at least willing to consider the qualities of Luciano’s future bride in terms that were not exclusively related to family name and dowry. However, in the end, Luciano married Giovanna Filangieri, daughter of the Prince of Satriano and
Gender relations within the family were deeply affected by the noblemen’s and ennobled bourgeois’ adoption of the paternalistic ethos in the nineteenth-century *Mezzogiorno*. The new language of intimacy and affection was particularly evident in the relations between husbands and wives and fathers and daughters in paternalistic households. The egalitarian concept of the family gave equal importance to all members of the household, whether they were males or females. This concept was extended to the law on the inheritance of the family patrimony, which in theory should have been divided equally, after the death of the father, among both sons and daughters. In practice, noblemen ignored the law and allowed the continuation of a system that privileged male over female inheritors, who continued to be discriminated along gender lines. Still, the formal change is indicative of the kind of egalitarian culture which accompanied the adoption of the paternalistic ethos among southern Italian noblemen. 101

The reciprocity implicit in egalitarian family relations was made explicit in the frequent correspondence of several noble families. Intimacy and affection emerge very clearly from the straightforward way of addressing each other, always using the informal pronouns; affection is demonstrated also by the genuine and reciprocal concern, especially over matters of health. Certainly, the effect of the display of affection by paternalistic noblemen toward the female members of the family was an increased closeness and an unknown degree of participation of the heads of the household in the private life of their wives, but even more of their daughters. 102

This in turn created a bond of reciprocal obligations between paternalistic fathers and daughters similar to the one that characterized the relation between fathers and

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101 In his study of the Neapolitan nobility, Paolo Macry concludes that what really changed in the nineteenth century was “the emphasis of the legal culture over principles. [The idea of] equality among individuals and the intimacy and solidarity of familial relations required the abolition of hierarchies” in the household; however, in the succession of the family patrimony, noblemen continued to prefer sons, mainly because of the risk of disappearance of the family name. See Macry, *Ottocento*, 10. On issues related to women’s rights and family patrimony, see the collection of essays in G. Calvi and I. Chabot, eds., *Le ricchezze delle donne. Diritti patrimoniali e poteri familiari in Italia (XIII-XIX secolo)* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1998); and the recent essay by I. Fazio, “Le ricchezze e le donne”, *Quaderni Storici* 101 (1999).

sons. In return for the affection and attention shown by their fathers, daughters had
to try their best to follow, or, at the very least, to listen and keep in mind parental
advice. Through the rhetoric of reciprocity paternalistic noblemen continued to have
control over the life of their daughters. Rather than imposing their authority, as in
the case of patriarchal families, paternalistic noblemen filled their daughters’ mind
with the expectations that they had about them and with the necessity of respecting
the contractual character of reciprocal relations by not disappointing their fathers.
These expectations revolved around the necessity for noble girls to train themselves
to become attractive to noblemen and ennobled bourgeois who were considered
convenient husbands, whether because of the prestige of their family name or
because of the patrimony attached to them. In this respect, there had only been a
superficial change in gender relations with the adoption of the paternalistic ethos.
Women continued to be expected to fit into their social role of suitable candidates
for a prestigious wedding, most likely one celebrating the union between two
important families. It is also true, however, that women were far more likely to
accept their situation because of the fact that they no longer had the impression of
having their fate assigned to them as an imposition coming from the patriarchal
authority of the family; rather, they felt increasingly involved in the selection of
their partner and, in a few cases, they went as far as actually having the chance of
conditioning their father’s decision with their consent or their denial. 103

Illuminating, in this respect, is the behavior of the Duke of Terranova toward his
adopted daughter, Giulia Brunas Serra, the sister of Luciano Brunas Serra, over
marriage and the choice of a suitable partner. 104 In 1837 Giulia Brunas had not yet
been adopted by the Duke as his daughter; however, the Duke clearly treated her as
a part of his family, especially given the fact that he was ready to give her a
considerable dowry (40,000 ducats), provided she married somebody that met his
approval. Giulia had been proposed to already by a civil servant called De Biase,
whom the Duke liked and with whom he had already agreed on the dowry;

103 Montroni reports the case of the Duke of Mondragone, who wrote to the Prince of Bisignano that
his choice for the daughter’s partner strictly depended on her consent; see Montroni, Gli uomini del
Re, 40.
however, Luciano did not like the idea of De Biase marrying his sister and entertained a correspondence with the Duke on the reasons for his behavior. Writing in his typical colloquial style, the Duke said to Luciano that he had “no reason other than making Giulia happy”. Furthermore, he wrote that, although De Biase did not come from a well-known family, he was certainly the best candidate if Giulia liked him, given the fact that the only prestigious names that had proposed Giulia were impoverished noblemen who were after her dowry.  

When Luciano wrote to the Duke that he did not believe De Biase really loved his sister, the Duke answered that he had never thought that a marriage could start as a romance, since most unions were based on little more than matters of convenience and money. Therefore, even if De Biase did not love Giulia, it was enough that he wanted to marry her, because in time she would have become attached to him and she would have learnt how to love him. With this letter, the Duke made clear to Luciano that Giulia was no different from any other daughter of a prominent family. No matter how attached to their daughters paternalistic noblemen professed to be, at the crucial time of taking the decision of their lifetime, they were still influencing them, if not regulating them, by asking them to keep into account matters related to convenience and money, rather than happiness.

The Duke had clear ideas about what reciprocity meant in the relation with his daughter; he spoke of them in a previous letter to Luciano:

For a girl, choosing and deciding [about the partner] must have to do with sympathy, the look, and the behavior ... what then is a matter of convenience, such as the amount of land owned, and even more the kind of moral qualities of the groom and of his family, is something that a girl is unable ... to detect in order to decide on her own ... it is the duty of those to whom she belong to search for this information in the most delicate manner; this is what I have been trying to do.

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104 The story is reported in Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 38-42.
105 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 24 February 1838, quoted in Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 38.
106 See Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 2 December 1837, quoted in Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 39.
107 Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 6 December 1837, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN.
According to the Duke, the business of marrying daughters was clearly divided between the part related to the emotional sphere, where women were in charge, and the part related to business, where men were in charge: Giulia had decision-making power only as long as the reason for her choice was restricted to what she felt about her partner's "sympathy, look, and behavior." Financial matters, such as "the amount of land owned", had to be handled by her adoptive father. To the Duke, therefore, reciprocity meant giving his daughter all the emotional support she needed and, in return for this, insisting that she conform to her social role as an instrument for the conduct of the family business. Paternalistic noblemen tended to give more attention to their daughters' wishes and look for their approval, but only as long as this did not upset the asymmetry of power between genders within the family, where the final word over financial matters continued to be held by the male head of the household. 108

In the antebellum American South, paternalistic planters extended the concept of contractual reciprocity between members of the family to relations between masters and laborers. Slaves became part of an ideal extended family in which planters saw themselves as obliged by moral duty to take personal interest in the lives of their subjects. Paternalistic planters often knew their slaves by name. They worried about their health, and they interfered frequently in their lives, both in violent and non-violent ways. Indeed, they justified the entire slave system by claiming that they were in charge of helpless children who needed guidance and were suited for work under their directions. Outside the family walls, paternalistic planters understood reciprocity as the implicit obligation to take care of the slaves and feed them in return for their work. 109

108 The main reason for Giulia's difficulty in finding a partner belonging to a well-known family was the fact that she had not yet been adopted by the Duke; soon after this happened, in 1838, she married Ferdinando Lucchesi Palli, member of one of the most illustrious families of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. On asymmetrical power relations between men and women within the family, see Fiume, "Making Women Visible", 5.
109 For a summary of the paternalistic ideology, see Kolchin, American Slavery, 111-118; according to Kolchin, "masters saw their slaves not just as their laborers, but also as their 'people', inferior members of their extended households from whom they expected work and obedience, but to whom
As Peter Kolchin has noted, “the racial component also appears to have contributed to the paternalistic feeling of many antebellum planters that their slaves needed care and protection, which it was their Christian duty to provide.” Racial inferiority, which inspired benevolence by slaveholders, was, according to the religious version of the “proslavery argument”, divinely sanctioned. Particularly significant are the reflections of South Carolinian James Henry Thornwell, the most famous religious advocate of slavery. Thornwell wrote that slavery was “the obligation to labor for another determined by the Providence of God, independent of the provision of a contract”. Thornwell’s idea of paternalism as a slaveholders’ obligation thus was firmly grounded in God’s will, and the kind of reciprocal relations of rights and duties stemming from it was just a consequence of the Providence’s design. The religious argument for slavery did much to transform paternalism into a mainstream social practice among slaveholders and, at the same time, provided a benign and cultivated explanation for the existence of a racially exploited class of laborers in the American South. It also justified the reason for close contact between master and slaves, since it was the master’s duty not just to take care of the material welfare of the slaves, but also to educate them to the

they owed guidance and protection” (112). The idea of an extended household which included the slaves was one of the pillars of the proslavery argument, which was at the heart of the paternalistic ethos; see Genovese, “Our Family, White and Black”, 72-73. Willie Lee Rose writes that “proslavery philosophers intended to suggest a benign institution that encouraged between masters and slaves the qualities so much admired in the Victorian family: cheerful obedience and gratitude on the part of the children (read slaves), and paternalistic wisdom, protection, and discipline on the part of the father (read master); see Rose, “The Domestication of Domestic Slavery”, 127. However, according to Genovese, “the master-slave relationship, viewed as family matter, did not require special kindness or leniency; it required only a strong sense of duty and responsibility” for the welfare of the slaves; see Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made, 199. Talking about the undiminished harshness of the master-slave relation, Paul Escott went as far as arguing that “paternalism may have existed for white southerners primarily as a defense against outside criticism and as an argument that they were giving their bondsmen all the care that they required; see P. D. Escott, Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).


teachings of Christianity.  

In essence, planters’ paternalism implied continuous personal contact between masters and slaves, a contact which led to a deeper reciprocal knowledge never experienced under the patriarchal system. Paternalism could flourish only in a situation in which planters acted as resident slaveholders, directly managing their own work force by knowing as much as possible about its strengths and weaknesses. Unlike patriarchal planters, paternalistic ones tried to enforce their own will by acting personally as sources of authority on the plantations. Even when they used overseers, they closely supervised the entire work routine, and they made sure that slaves understood their rules of behavior and followed them. However, it was precisely the closer contact between masters and slaves that allowed slaves to take advantage of the system, making sure that the reciprocity implicit in the planters’ paternalistic ideology had some real value. On a daily basis slaves resisted their masters’ attempts to control their lives and set their own rules. In doing this, they made clear that there had to be some substance to the planters’ pretensions to care for them.  

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113 The best description of the idea of reciprocity implicit in the paternalistic relationship between masters and slaves is in Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 3-7. Genovese writes that “paternalism defined the involuntary labor of the slaves as a legitimate return to their master for protection and direction”; at the same time, “paternalism’s insistence upon mutual obligations – duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights – implicitly recognized the slaves’ humanity” (5). For a contemporary view of the rights and duties of slaves under the paternalistic system, see O. Lee, “The Laborer: His Rights and Duties”, De Bow’s Review, 22 (1857); according to Lee the master is the one “who feeds, clothes, and protects them [the slaves] alike in infancy, sickness, and old age, and who is bound by State laws to provide for all their wants throughout life” (490). In practice, this meant continuous interference of paternalistic masters in the slaves’ life from the time they were born to the time they died; see Kolchin, American Slavery, 118-127. Slaves, in turn, resisted the paternalistic pretensions through repeated attempts at slowing down the pace of work, stealing the master’s property, and asserting their own concept of “moral economy”; see Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 285-324, and...
One of the best-known examples of planter paternalism is the writings of James Henry Hammond (1807-1864) of South Carolina. Hammond was a typical cotton planter in the making, who gradually worked his way up until he reached the position of Governor. In 1831, through his marriage with Catherine Fitzsimmons, he acquired Silver Bluff, a cotton plantation with 147 slaves in the South Carolina upcountry. Soon after, he started his career as a resident planter, most of the time directly managing and supervising his work force with the help of an overseer. In his instructions to the overseer, which were held as an ideal model, he stressed the importance of being not too severe with the slaves, since excessive resort to violence signaled a failure at establishing authority. He wrote that “too much whipping indicates a bad tempered, or inattentive manager and will not be allowed.” Hammond’s idea of paternalism was clear: he felt his duty to be in charge of the management of his work force and to care for it within the boundaries of the master-slave relationship.

Hammond’s most significant document is his diary, which he intended to be secret, and which reports his personal view on nearly everything that happened at Silver Bluff between 1841 and 1864. As a typical paternalistic planter, Hammond strove to strike a balance between the paternalistic ideal of reciprocity and the


114 James Henry Hammond was born in 1807, the son of a native from Massachusetts and a South Carolinian woman; he studied law and practiced it in Columbia, South Carolina, where he also published a newspaper for a brief period. His marriage with Charleston heiress Catherine Fitzsimmons in 1831 transformed his life bringing him into the restricted circle of the South Carolinian planter aristocracy. After this, his political career was almost a continuous string of successes: in 1836 he was elected to Congress, in 1841 he became general of the state militia, in 1842 he was elected governor over Robert Allston, and finally in 1857 he won a seat in the United States Senate and he moved to Washington, where he was regarded as one of the spiritual fathers of the movement for southern secession from the Union. Hammond was also widely acknowledged as a progressive intellectual, a refined proslavery ideologue, and an enthusiastic advocate of agricultural modernization. Hammond’s life has been thoroughly investigated by Drew Faust in D. G. Faust, James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); see also C. Eaton, "The Hamlet of the Old South", in C. Eaton, The Mind of the Old South (Baton Rouge. Louisiana State University Press, 1964); and, on the Hammond family, C. Bleser, The Hammonds of Redcliffe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

115 "Governor’s Hammond’s Instructions to His Overseer" in Rose, ed., A Documentary History of Slavery in America.
rational, calculating management of the plantation. On one hand, he worried about the health of the slaves, who suffered from high death-rates throughout the 23 years. Although, as Drew Faust recognizes, “the desire to manage ... [slaves’] health” had a lot to do with economic reasons, it is difficult not to see a genuine humanitarian concern in diary entries such as the following one:

Have had several days of anxiety and fatigue among my sick people ... Today however has been the most painful of all. A valuable [slave] woman was taken in labor yesterday and last night it was ascertained that the presentation was wrong. Dr. Foreman was sent for, who called Dr. Bradford. There was also a spasmodic contraction of the womb. Three pounds of blood were taken without producing any relaxation ... In spite of every stimulant she died. She was a good creature as ever lived.

On the other hand, since his arrival at Silver Bluff, in 1831, Hammond set to employ the gang-system, which exhausted the slaves and required the implementation of a harsh discipline. He did this both to assert his power by creating a docile labor force and to increase the efficiency of cotton production on the plantation. However, by 1850, the slaves had forced him to go back to the much less rigorous task system, to which they were accustomed, by slowing down the pace of work, frequently feigning illness, and creating incidents which contributed to an overall poor performance for several years. The slaves resisted both this and other attempts at interfering in their lives, refusing the design of total control that Hammond had in mind, and even leading him to reward them for particularly efficient work performances. Indeed, he complained that his slaves were “too well fed and otherwise well treated.” Clearly, planters’ and slaves’ ideas of reciprocity were very different and implied different expectations. However, in the words of Drew Faust, “in the emotional and ideological context of paternalism, this dialectic of oppression, challenge, and concession produce[d] the interdependence

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116 See Faust, James Henry Hammond and the Old South, 75.
118 James Henry Hammond’s Plantation Diary, 22 October, 1843, quoted in Faust, James Henry Hammond and the Old South, 90.
of lord and bondsman that Eugene Genovese has so arrestingly described." 119

Hammond’s desire to construct a model-plantation, rationally managed and with relations of reciprocity between master and slaves, was perfectly in tune with the capitalist spirit of several other planters in the antebellum South. Certainly, it was no accident that Hammond was a cotton planter, since cotton planters epitomized the entrepreneurial spirit which was more characteristic of, but not restricted to, the newer sections of the southern landed elites. Paternalistic planters were usually those planters that combined ideas of entrepreneurship with rational management of the work force. In its essence, the paternalistic ethos was the ideology of a planter elite committed to the modernization of southern agriculture and its central feature, slavery. In this respect, the proslavery argument, which was central to paternalistic ideology, was tightly linked -- as Bertram Wyatt-Brown has argued -- to “the desire to modernize, to improve the ‘home system’, so that its foundations were no less secure, no less progressive than those on which free labor rested.” 120

119 See D. G. Faust, “Culture, Conflict, and Community: The Meaning of Power on an Antebellum Plantation”, Journal of Social History 14 (1980), 84; Faust considers the study of James Henry Hammond and his slaves at Silver Bluff as “an opportunity to supplement and refine some of Genovese’s insights about the sources of that ‘reciprocity’ he has urged as a defining feature of the slaves system” (84). A full account of Hammond’s attempt at imposing his paternalistic pretensions and the slaves’ response is in Faust, James Henry Hammond and the Old South, 69-104. Hammond’s design for total control of the slaves aimed particularly at influencing their minds and included enforcement of white practices regarding both religion and health; however, in spite of his effort, the slaves managed to carve room for religious autonomy and keep the black church alive and, at the same time, continued to rely on folk beliefs rather than submitting to scientific medical practices. Moreover, an impressive number of runaways -- an average of two per year, between 1831 and 1855 -- testifies to repeated attempts at challenging Hammond’s imposition of his will and system of management over the slaves at Silver Bluff; see J. H. Franklin and L. Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 292-293.

120 Wyatt-Brown, “Modernizing Southern Slavery”, 28. The progressive planters’ commitment to agricultural modernization, which fell short of abolishing slavery, has been analyzed in E. D. Genovese, The Slaveholders’ Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); see also D. G. Faust, A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Modernizing agricultural production keeping the slave system intact created a situation by which progressive planters went as far as they could in following the practices of industrial capitalism, finding at the same time a correspondent of their paternalistic behavior in the highly personalized management of several nineteenth-century factories. In his recent study on “plantation capitalism”, Mark Smith has argued that “those planters most devoted to the cause of progress mimicked northern factory-owning moderns to the extreme ... these were planters who did not want merely to order the times of work, but who aimed, like northern factory-owners, to regulate the productivity and rate of labor as well”; see M. M. Smith, “Time, Slavery, and Plantation Capitalism in the Ante-Bellum American South”, Past and Present 150 (1996). However, according
Significantly, in Virginia and in the old areas of tobacco production, paternalistic planters were usually those progressive planters who also advocated agricultural reform and crop diversification. However, the fact that in Virginia slavery was a decaying institution certainly caused planters who were more radical in their progressive ideas to feel increasingly uncomfortable with the contradiction inherent in the coexistence of paternalistic modernization with agricultural slavery. Particularly interesting is the case of John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo (1780-1866), the Virginian agricultural reformer and staunch opponent of the “tyranny” of tobacco monoculture. Cocke set out to implement a program of total control of his slaves’ life similar to the one James Henry Hammond had in mind. Between 1801 and 1860, strict supervision of the slaves’ labor, enforcement of discipline, and calculated employment of punishment and rewards created a “para-military regimen” on his plantation at Bremo. At the same time, Cocke provided his slaves with comfortable cabins, plenty of clothes and food, and opportunities to acquire the rudiments of education. His paternalism was coupled with the zeal of moral reformer, a result of his leadership in the Temperance Movement. Indeed, his efforts at implementing total control of his slaves was related to his ideas about morally elevating their souls. By 1831, Cocke had come to believe that, just as reliance on tobacco had ruined southern agriculture, reliance on slavery had

to James Oakes “if the [agricultural] reformers’ vision of a rationalized bureaucracy looked forward to advanced forms of industrial organization, it also recalled paternalistic conceptions in its evocation of a harmoniously integrated social world” ; see Oakes, The Ruling Race, 191. See also Newby, “Paternalism and Capitalism”, 70-73.


The life and achievements of John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo are treated exhaustively in M. Boyd Coyner, Jr., John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo: Agriculture and Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South”, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961); on Cocke’s designs for total control, see 119-143. Cocke called the supervision of his slaves “my government” and believed that “good discipline made
corrupted southern morality. Consequently, his fight for agricultural modernization became a fight against the evil of slavery. His plans were coincident with the ideas of the founders of the Colonization Society, which promoted the manumission of slaves and their return to Africa. However, Cocke was convinced that the slaves needed to be prepared for freedom through a long and extensive training, mainly focusing on religious indoctrination, implemented by their masters whilst still in bondage. Since slavery was a sin, which corrupted the slave no less than the master, slaves needed to purify their souls by receiving the teachings of Christianity; only then, Cocke thought, would the slaves be prepared to receive the full burden of freedom.  

Between 1820 and 1860, Cocke and his second wife Louisa, a devout believer, implemented a massive program of religious indoctrination of their slaves at Bremo. Whilst clergymen preached to the slaves every Saturday and Sunday in the plantation chapel, Louisa Cocke taught slave children the rudiments of reading and writing. Both John and Louisa considered what they did for the moral uplift and education of the slaves as part of their duties as slaveholders. In 1863, Cocke wrote in his journal, “as soon as I determined to be a slaveholder I became sensible of the responsibility I assumed for the Beings over whom I assumed the Control.” Such responsibilities included “to increase the intelligence and improve the moral character” of the slaves. In order to have a complete program of moral education, Cocke also enforced “a system of police designed to increase cleanliness and comfort in their [the slaves’] persons and houses”, and strict regulations designed to eradicate the use of alcohol from the slaves. Significantly, regarding his temperance program on the plantation, Cocke was praised by his friend – as well as James Henry Hammond’s friend -- and famous agricultural reformer, Edmund Ruffin, who was himself fighting against “drunkenness among slaves” and who had

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gone as far as becoming member of a black temperance society. 125

All the efforts of Cocke and his wife to forcefully instill ideas of Christian morality encountered continuous opposition from the slaves. Thievery never stopped and neither did adultery. In spite of the frequent floggings given by Cocke and his overseers for acts of immorality and the threats to be sold to other -- perhaps more brutal, and less idealistic -- masters, several slaves continued to resist attempts at total control of their minds and souls. Typical is the story of the foreman George, who, like other slaves, in order to continue to drink whiskey and wine in spite of Cocke’s temperance rules, ran away from Bremo several times. It is obvious that slaves understood that, in spite of Cocke’s rhetoric, their status as bound laborers did not have a chance to change unless they submitted to their master’s will. However, given the powerful influence that he had on their minds and especially on their children’s minds, through education and religious indoctrination, relatively few slaves continued to openly oppose him, while they were attracted in increasing numbers to the prospect of freedom. Cocke’s paternalistic program reached its highest success in 1833, when he freed Peyton Skipwith, a servant whom he considered “prepared for the change”, because of his commitment to temperance and his devotion to Christianity. Skipwith was a slave who had accepted his master’s teachings and performed well in his work; in return for this he had been given the reward he sought. 126

125 John Hartwell Cocke to Rev. Henry Smith, 1 October 1831, quoted in Boyd Coyner, “John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo”, 324; and Edmund Ruffin to John Hartwell Cocke, 20 October 1834, quoted in Boyd Coyner, “John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo”, 340. Among the many intrusions into slaves’ lives was the attempt at regulating their marriages, so that they would not live in sin. Cocke encouraged slaves’ legal unions and manifested his approval of them by making personal gifts to the slaves, as several letters in the family correspondence of the Cocke family testify. As an example, in a letter written to her sister Louisiana, Ann B. Cocke, John Hartwell Cocke’s eldest daughter, wrote about the wedding of the family cook Kezia “we had a very merry Christmas. Kezia the cook was married to Charles the bricklayer. Papa gave him one of the soldier coats for his wedding, coat that he kept for his second days. We understood that he wore a long blue coat and white pantaloons. They had a very nice cake, biscuits and ... coffee, and tea”; Ann B. Cocke and Philip St. George Cocke to Louisiana Cocke, 29 December 1823, Cocke Family Papers, 9513-H, University of Virginia.

126 The full story of the Skipwith slave family and their manumission by Cocke is in Miller, ed., “Dear Master”, which also contains the letters of the Skipwiths to Cocke from Liberia. On Cocke’s and his wife Louisa’s commitment to Christianity and moral reform as part of a general religious culture of antebellum Virginian slaveholders, see J. C. Willis, “From the Dictates of Pride to the
However, in spite of all the rhetoric surrounding his ideas about the preparation of slaves for their future manumission, Cocke’s primary objective was to create a docile labor force, and one that was totally committed to its master for as long as he felt necessary. Cocke took paternalistic reciprocity a further step than Hammond: if the slaves worked zealously and hard enough to deserve it, the master would provide for their material and spiritual welfare, teaching them the blessings of Christianity, and, eventually, granting the gift of freedom. It is no accident that it was Cocke, the same agricultural reformer who was experimenting in crop diversification, that perfected paternalism, stretching the concept of reciprocity as far as it could go short of abolishing slavery as a system. Whilst morally uplifting his slaves, Cocke was also busy trying to improve the agricultural performance of his plantation; he implemented marling, application of animal manure, crop rotation, and several different techniques of preparation of the ground for cultivation. He raised his last tobacco crop in 1839; thereafter, he only grew wheat and corn, but obtained mixed results. Still, his efforts at modernizing southern agriculture were strictly related to his attempts at reforming slavery, making it a more responsive system for the slaves, who, even if still under the strict control of the master, were treated more humanely and were motivated by the perspective of their future manumission. In this respect, therefore, Cocke’s example shows simultaneously the advantages and the limitations of the paternalistic ethos implemented by progressive planters in the American South

Unlike American planters, progressive noblemen and ennobled bourgeois in the Mezzogiorno did not have to come to terms with the contradiction inherent in the implementation of agricultural modernization in a system of unfree labor. However, the backwardness of agricultural techniques and the structural constraints of a market, which was not nearly as developed as the one in the American South,


127 On Cocke’s activity as agricultural reformer, see C. W. Turner, “Virginia Agricultural Reform, 1815-1860”, Agricultural History 21 (1952); see also Chapter Three in this thesis.
conditioned modernizing attempts by progressive latifondisti to no less extent than the slave system did with southern slaveholders. As in the American South, in southern Italy, rational ideas of managing both land and labor characterized mostly the newer sections of the landed elite. Entrepreneurial landowners often were either overseers and stewards who had worked their way up in the administration of noble estates or landed bourgeois who had benefited from the sale of land that occurred after the abolition of the feudal laws. The ethos of these new social classes was similar to that of paternalistic planters in the American South. Besides implementing ideas of rational management and capitalist conduct on their landed estates, entrepreneurial landowners were also fairly flexible in the use of their work force and willing to experiment a variety of tenancy forms on their land; they often acted in a truly paternalistic way toward their laborers and they implicitly rejected the patriarchal ethos and its corollaries about absenteeism and indirect supervision.128

The key to efficient land and workforce management for most southern Italian progressive landowners lay in the direct conduct of their estates and in the direct supervision of the workforce. The most important advocates of these principles were all involved to some degree with the production and sale of the most valuable agricultural exports, such as citrus, olive oil, and wine. Moreover, these same

128 A classic example of entrepreneurial landowners who came in possession of a large landed estate, where they implemented diversification of economic activities and flexibility in the use of the work force is that of the Moscati in Principato Citra; see R. Moscati, Una famiglia "borghese" nel Mezzogiorno e altri saggi (Naples, 1964); see also B. Salvemini, “Note sul concetto di Ottocento meridionale” in B. Salvemini, L’innovazione precaria. Spazi, mercati e società nel Mezzogiorno tra Sette e Ottocento (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1995), 21-22. For a particularly interesting case of paternalism among southern Italian progressive landowners Montroni’s treatment of the Duke of Terranova in his relation with the personnel of his landed estates, in Montroni, Gli uomini del Re, 85-93; see also M. Giorgio, “L’azienda calabrese dei Serra di Gerace, 43-49. According to Mariarosaria Giorgio, “the paternalistic model, which the nineteenth-century landed aristocracy use[d] in order to bind the poorest peasant classes” is revealed in particular kinds of tenancies called ingabbellazioni a dettaglio, implemented on the Calabrian estates of the Duke of Terranova; these were contracts that gave the braccianti small portions of land and crops together with a temporary employment, which was enough for them to live on (46). Moreover, from the reading of the letters of the Duke of Terranova to his adopted son on the administration of the landed estate, Mariarosaria Giorgio concludes that “the reciprocity of the obligations [manifested] in the relations [of the Duke] with the personnel in the administration and with the several agricultural employees who continue[d] to be bound to his estate reveal a concept of labor relations as markedly personalized and paternalistic” (48).
landowners were widely known for the efficiency and success of their own production and for their attempts to promote ideas about agricultural reform. By combining efficient cash-crop production and direct conduct of the landed estates, entrepreneurial landowners strove to maximize their profit, like entrepreneurial planters in the American South; however, unlike American planters, southern Italian entrepreneurs had to come to terms with the structural constraints of an underdeveloped market, where merchant activity was extremely precarious and poorly organized. Therefore, the diversification of economic activity and flexibility in labor relations on the *latifondo* were absolutely crucial in order to be able to adapt to the frequent oscillations in market demand and to invest in quick financial operations with a high return in the short-term. Rather than being dependent -- as in the case of American planters -- on global demand and the consequent course of prices of just cotton or wheat, southern Italian entrepreneurial landowners were forced to concentrate their efforts on the production of several crops that were particularly valuable on the market.\(^{129}\)

Since their workforce consisted not of enslaved African Americans but of free indigenous peasants, the paternalistic ethos of southern Italian landowners applied to their relation with the laborers in a different way than the one between masters and slaves. Much like what occurred in other nineteenth-century agrarian societies, *latifondisti* intended reciprocity as a way to guarantee workers subsistence and protection in return for their loyalty toward the family that owned the estate. The "guarantee system" struck a balance between the landowners' needs for minimum labor conflict and efficient production and the needs of the workforce for a certain degree of stability and security in their employment. The employees working at

\(^{129}\) On the rationality of the entrepreneurial behavior of southern Italian landowners, see again Salvemini, "Note sul concetto di Ottocento meridionale", 22-24; see also A. Banti, "Gli imprenditori meridionali: razionalità e contesto", *Meridiana* 6 (1989). On the ideological outlook of entrepreneurial *latifondisti* and their attempts at implementing agricultural reform, see Lupo, "I proprietari terrieri del Mezzogiorno", 112-118. According to Lupo, the "model of the mixed agricultural enterprise, partially transformed by the cultivation of commercial crops, represents a real model of agrarian progress for several proprietors, both noble and non-noble" (112); furthermore, Lupo writes that the very idea of "agrarian progress" is related to the "enlightened vanguard" of the *latifondisti* (113), certainly the ones more involved in entrepreneurial activities. It is no accident that this type of landed estate, characterized by mixed cultivation, was also the one that was more
fixed salaries, called provisionati (provisionees) were the cornerstone of the entire guarantee system as a reciprocal understanding of rights and duties: in the words of Marta Petrusewicz, "it was the provisionati's duty to work well, respect the owners, and be disciplined, obedient, and loyal; it was the master's duty to treat them well and protect them."

In practice, the guarantee system was the key factor that prevented the latifondo from becoming a wholly capitalist enterprise and preserved its hybrid character through the persistence of personalized relations and the implementation of noncash rewards of masters toward their laborers. At the same time, the system of protection "guaranteed" the peasants' access to the land as a supplement to their subsistence wage, and therefore had the double effect of preventing the proletarianization of the work force, which was living only partly off its wage, and of providing an unlimited supply of cheap labor. Even though Petrusewicz insists that the "guarantee system" was different from Genovese's interpretation of planters' paternalism because of the more personalized relationship between master and slave, both ideologies have an impressive number of characteristics in common. The most important common feature is the idea of reciprocal rights and duties which bound in a sort of tacit agreement masters and laborers. More to the point is the fact that, in both cases, the master would protect the laborers in return for the services provided with their work. However, whilst in the American South, planters invented paternalism to justify slavery, and slaves had little option but trying to mold it to their advantage, in the Mezzogiorno, due to the non existence of slavery, the "guarantee system" was much closer to a true labor contract that bound an employer to a free employee.

adaptable to the fluctuations of the market demand in the Mezzogiorno.

130 See Petrusewicz, Latifundium, 185; Petrusewicz, in fact, argues that the whole "workability of the latifondo system depended primarily on the masters' and workers' recognition of reciprocity in their relations (185).

131 See Petrusewicz, Latifundium, 17; according to Petrusewicz, in "the paternalism of the American slave system ... the relationship between master and slave was essentially personal, and links of control and subordination led from the individuals within one class to individuals within another"; this contributed in creating an atmosphere of class conflict, which was virtually absent on the latifondo (17). Petrusewicz has been heavily criticized for these implications and accused of not taking proper account of several episodes of peasants' revolts, especially among the exploited braccianti; see the debate between Giancarlo De Vivo, John Davis, and Piero Bevilacqua in the Times Literary Supplement, 8 November 1991; 29 November 1991; 6 December 1991; and 27
Still, the exploitation that was masked under the two different types of masters’ paternalism was evident in the clear imbalance of power between masters and workers and in the strict control that planters and latifondisti had over the life and the work of slaves and peasants.  

A case of southern Italian progressive latifondista who came close to implementing a program of total control over the life of the workers on his landed estate is that of Vito Nunziante, Sr. (1775-1836), Marquis of San Ferdinando. Born from a family which belonged to the landed bourgeoisie of Campania, Vito Nunziante managed to climb the military ranks to the level of commander-in-chief of the Bourbon army and then Secretary of State under Ferdinand II; in 1816, acknowledging his loyalty to the crown, the King granted him the noble title. Nunziante was a complex personality and manifested very diverse interests, the most important of which were related to economic improvement and agricultural reform. He was a member of the Economic Society of Calabria Ultra I, and he was engaged in several attempts at land reclamation throughout the kingdom. At heart, he was a landed entrepreneur close to the king, and he was in contact with the most important economic reformers of the time, including Carlo Afan de Rivera and Ludovico Bianchini.  

In 1817, Vito Nunziante set out to reclaim land on the plain of Rosarno, in Calabria, which was heavily infested by malaria; by 1822, he had managed to complete most of the work and in the process had founded a new village, San  

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132 For a full account on the “guarantee system” and the way it worked on the Calabrian estates of the Barracco family, see Petrusewicz, Latifundium, 185-214; see also, specifically on the non-proletarianization of the labor force of the latifondo, M. Petrusewicz, “Wage-Earners but Not Proletarians: Wage Labor and Social Relations in the Nineteenth-Century Calabrian Latifondo”, Review 10: 3 (1987); and Petrusewicz, “The Demise of Latifondismo”, 33-39. For a contrasting view, see G. Arrighi and F. Piselli, “Capitalist Development in Hostile Environments”, Review 10: 4 (1987). For an example of paternalism among Neapolitan aristocrats, although in a different setting, see Macry, Ottocento, 63-74; Macry refers of the use among Neapolitan nobles of remembering the family maids in the last wills and relates it to the “reciprocity of the paternalistic ethic ... which is typical of labor relations which are still strongly personalized.” (66-67).  

133 A full account of the life of Nunziante is in G.C ivile and G. Montroni, Tram il nobile e il borghese, Storia e memoria di una famiglia di notabili meridionali (Naples: Libreria Dante & Descartes, 1996), 31-47; see also F. Nunziante, “Il generale Vito Nunziante (1775-1836)”, Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane 23 (1964).
Ferdinando. A contemporary source describes the foundation as characterized by “two lines of houses, with a large avenue in the middle; at one end, a church, at the other end, an isolated palace ... He [Nunziante] called this village San Ferdinando, and he placed there a priest, a doctor, and the necessary craftsmen, taking them, with royal permission, from His Majesty’s convicts, who were quite a lot back then.” 134 The village was the exclusive property of Nunziante: he owned both the land and the houses, and gave them for free for the first two years to any peasant willing to work. Soon, the population of San Ferdinando began to rise, and, by 1850, some years after the death of Nunziante, it included more than 1,000 inhabitants; of these, 587 were coloni (tenants), while 216 were massari (sort of overseers). In the early years of the village most of the work in construction and agriculture had been performed by servi di pena, convicts who finished their sentence working for private individuals. Together with the braccianti, the servi di pena were the poorest and most exploited category of laborers at San Ferdinando. 135

Still, the village founded by Vito Nunziante and inherited by his sons and nephews generation after generation, was an impressive example of the kind of paternalistic ethos which characterized ennobled bourgeois like the Barracco and the Nunziante themselves. According to Aurelio Lepre, “the fact that at San Ferdinando everything – including both the land and the houses – was owned by the Nunziante gave, beyond doubt, a particular character to their relation with the peasants; a relation which can be defined as the one of a padre/padrone (father/master) [toward his subjects].” Far from diminishing with the passing of time, the strength of the paternalistic bond between landlords and peasants at San Ferdinando increased with the Nunziante’s direct management of all the services

134 F. Palermo, Vita e fatti di Vito Nunziante [1839], 85; quoted in Civile and Monroni, Tra il nobile e il borghese, 40.
135 Data on the population of San Ferdinando in 1850 from Civile and Monroni, Tra il nobile e il borghese, 42. Civile and Monroni write about the difference in treatment between the massari, most of whom lived in the brick houses of the village, and the peasants, who lived in the pagliaie, miserable dwellings made of straw. The massari, therefore, were a kind of privileged class within the village, which was acknowledged by the caution Nunziante used in dealing with them, as opposed to his “rational exploitation of the servi di pena (43).
that they provided to the community. The Nunziante considered San Ferdinando as the nucleus of their family property; it is not very difficult to imagine that they considered the agricultural laborers who lived there as a sort of extended family, similar to the way paternalistic planters saw the slaves on their plantations as part of their own extended household. And, indeed, the fact that Nunziante provided the inhabitants of San Ferdinando with well-built houses and a church, together with his choice of placing Father Pietro Arecchi, a priest, in charge of the general administration of the landed estate and of the management of the work force, remind one of John Hartwell Cocke of Bremo’s designs for control of his slaves’ minds and souls. In both cases, the master succeeded in persuading the laborers of their obligations to care for their welfare in return for the work that they performed for him. In both cases, he took paternalistic reciprocity a step further with the idea that the master’s duty was to provide for the physical as well as spiritual well-being of his laborers.

Interestingly, as in Cocke’s case, Nunziante’s paternalistic project went hand in hand with a parallel project of modernization and agricultural improvement on his

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136 See A. Lepre, Storia del Mezzogiorno d’Italia, Vol. II: Dall’Antico Regime alla società borghese (1657-1860) (Naples: Liguori, 1986), 143. The idea of the padre/padrone (father/master), which resembles the concept at the core of the proslavery argument in the American South, is a very old one and is essential to understand the southern Italian version of paternalism. It became a widely used metaphor in the relations between landowners and laborers after being used for a long time to describe the tie that bound the noblemen to their former feudal subjects. A good example is a letter written by Rocco Saudini, mayor of the Apulian village of Villasparta, in order to welcome the return of his former feudal lord, the Duke of Gesso, in 1815, after the Restoration of Ferdinand IV on the throne. On behalf of the whole population of Villasparta, Saudini wrote “Your Excellency, Lord and Master, the tie that binds a Father to his children can never be broken, [it is] the reciprocal Love of those who can never live apart. We, interpreting the feelings of the Citizens, the ones Governed by us, and the ones who are your Vassals, feel obliged to manifest to Your Excellency the Master the sincere happiness felt by all of us in knowing that you are back to Your Most Illustrious Family, after your absence of several years” (Rocco Saudini to the Duke of Gesso, 5 August 1815, Caracciolo di Cellamare Family Papers, ASN).

137 In this sense, the Nunziante’s concept of reciprocity was close to the one that characterized relations between the Duke of Terranova and the personnel on his Calabrian landed estate. In fact, in his letters to his adopted son on the estate’s administration, the Duke often manifested concern for the happiness and well being of the tenants; among the Duke’s paternalistic initiatives was the one of distributing every Christmas through his agent Giffone 30 ducats among the poorest braccianti; the episode is reported in Agostino Serra to Luciano Brunas Serra, 1 January 1840, Serra di Gerace Family Papers, ASN. See alsoMontroni, Gli uomini del Re, 88-89; according to Montroni, “the numerous initiatives which were an expression of the master’s paternalism [were]aimed at guaranteeing the preservation of a social balance which was – as the Duke of Terranova was perfectly aware – essential to both master and peasants” (91).
landed estate. On the San Ferdinando estate, commercial agriculture was far more important than subsistence activities from the very first years of the colony’s existence. Specialized cultivations, focusing on the growing of olives, vineyards, and citrus groves were continuously perfected by Vito Nunziante, his sons and nephews, until they became the strongest sector of production in the estate. By the 1850s, the Nunziante estate had become a complex enterprise in which diversification of production and transformation, and commercialization of olive, wine, and silk coexisted together; by then, the Nunziante were considered the most successful example of ennobled bourgeois entrepreneurs together with the Barracco: both of them had managed to assert the entrepreneurial spirit within the close ranks of the nobility, all the while maintaining intact the paternalistic ethos typical of the landed bourgeoisie to which they originally belonged.138

An emblematic example of an entrepreneurial landowner and an agricultural reformer behaving in a paternalistic way toward his workforce was the Neapolitan Giacomo Savarese (1808-1884). Savarese was originally a member of the landed bourgeoisie and a well-known advocate of modernization in agriculture; he had discussed the economic problems that affected the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in a series of essays proclaiming the importance of free-trade. In 1854, Ferdinand II appointed him President of the Land Reclaim Commission, where he had the chance to implement his own ideas on agricultural reform, and soon after he named him Baron. Throughout his career, Savarese stressed the necessity of enhancing the strength of the landowning class with a liberal economic policy. As a typical representative of the landowning bourgeoisie, Savarese believed that it was up to his class, rather than to the old absentee nobility, to lead the movement for agricultural innovation within the Kingdom.139

138 On the entrepreneurial character of the Nunziante enterprise, which gave increasingly higher returns under Vito Nunziante’s son Ferdinando (1801-1851) and the latter’s son Vito (1837-1905), see Civile and Montroni, *Tra il nobile e il borghese*, 49-146. See also G. Civile and G. Montroni, “L’azienda agraria dei Nunziante di San Ferdinando nella seconda metà del XIX secolo” in A. Maiastra, ed., *Problemi di storia delle campagne meridionali in età moderna e contemporanea* (Bari: Dedalo, 1981); and Salvemini, “Note sul concetto di Ottocento meridionale”, 22.

139 The life of Giacomo Savarese, and especially his political ideas, have been investigated in G. Aliberti, *Un oppositore agrario del Mezzogiorno: Giacomo Savarese* (Naples: Atti dell’Accademia
In his own estates, located on the Neapolitan coast and in *Terra di Lavoro*, Savarese produced wine and grew wheat, oranges, and tomatoes. Far from being an absentee landowner, Savarese spent considerable time managing his land, especially at Castellammare, where he had a villa and his citrus groves. In his diary, he made careful notes of the number and type of trees he planted in 1854, and he complained about not being up to the task of a truly good manager even though he attended to his fields every time he could leave his other occupations aside. For Savarese, the link between landownership and class was such that it implied the physical presence of the proprietor on his estates for most of the time; in this, he was close to the advocates of direct conduct of the landed estates as the only effective way of managing land and workforce.

The most interesting part of Savarese’s diary dealt with his ideas about relations with the workforce. Like other southern Italian landowners, Savarese rented tracts of his land to local peasants, who were bound by the agreement to grow the cash-crops that he sold for profit. In his diary Savarese was particularly careful in outlining the concept of reciprocity, maintaining clear distinctions between different classes, since he opposed any kind of social advancement of his peasants. Interestingly, in his thought Savarese linked reciprocity between master and laborers with rational management of the land in a way reminiscent of the paternalistic ethos of American planters. In a section titled “About Personal Politics”, Savarese wrote:

> in the proprietary system ... the idea of the master is a given ... In the proprietary system, the need of having a master is the reason for the good administration of the house ... the good of the things we own, in the

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di Scienze Morali e Politiche, 1967); for a brief summary, see also Di Somma and Fiorentino, “Cenni biografici”, 231. Savarese's beliefs about the landed bourgeoisie's -- or, rather the ennobled bourgeoisie, to which he belonged -- key role in guiding the agricultural modernization of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies fits neatly with Marta Petrusewicz's description of entrepreneurs and agricultural reformers in Petrusewicz, “Land-Based Modernization and the Culture of Landed Elites”. On Savarese as moderate reformer, see E. Croce, *La patria napoletana* (Milan: Adelphi, 1974), 56-63. See also, among the many important works written by Savarese, G. Savarese, *Memoria sul Tavolieri di Puglia di Giacomo Savarese* (Naples: Tipografia Plautina, 1832).

140 Giacomo Savarese’s Diary, 22 May 1854, Savarese Family Papers, ASN.

141 On Savarese’s bourgeois ethic as landed proprietor, see Lepre, *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, 151-152.
government of the family, is the consequence of the interest of the master ... Unless a landowner is lunatic, or ignorant, his interest leads him to make the best out of the things that he manages. The vineyard will be well-pruned, the tree well-cared, the land well-manured, the flock fat, the farmer rich, the tenant satisfied.  

For Savarese, the difference between landowners and tenants was as fixed and permanent as the difference between planter and slaves was for James Henry Hammond. The master’s duty was to care for his interest in the best possible way; by doing this, he believed that the master’s rational management of the landed estate would automatically bring an improvement in the conditions of his workforce. Reciprocity for him meant that the master would be able to provide for the well-being of his tenants through good administration. As long as the tenants did not aspire to anything more than what they had, being reasonably well-fed and with a secure position in employment, the master enjoyed minimum levels of class-conflict. For Savarese, it was clear that the master, by acting for his own good, implicitly acted for the workers’ good as well; Savarese’s rhetoric of reciprocity is impressively close to the characteristics of the “guarantee system” studied by Marta Petrušewicz on the Barracco estate. Certainly, it is no accident that both Savarese and the Barracco -- as well as the Nunziante -- were members of the landed bourgeoisie turned noblemen. As the most successful representatives of the newer sections of the southern Italian landed elite, they all had in common, together with progressive ideas on agricultural reform, a clear commitment to the ideology of paternalistic reciprocity.

142 Giacomo Savarese’s Diary, 9 June 1854, Savarese Family Papers, ASN.
143 On Savarese’s ideas on the proprietary system, see also Aliberti, Un oppositore agrario del Mezzogiorno, 25-30; interestingly, Aliberti notes that Savarese’s paternalism was particularly evident in his attitude toward the responsibilities of the upper class in mitigating the effects of the exploitation of factory workers (20).
144 Both Petrušewicz, in her study of the Barracco, and Civile and Montroni, in their study of the Nunziante, agree on the crucial point regarding the masters’ awareness of the necessity of concessions to the work force in order to maintain minimum levels of social conflict; certainly, this is also the case of the meaning of Giacomo Savarese’s words in his diary, which is undoubtedly the most eloquent document produced by any progressive landowner of the Mezzogiorno on the idea of reciprocity in labor relations.
Paternalism was the ideology of a progressive elite in both souths. Its appearance was strictly linked to the appearance of new classes of landed proprietors, whose fortunes had begun with the production and sale of commercialized crops in the nineteenth-century world-market. As a progressive ideology, paternalism distanced itself from the old patriarchal ethos, both in terms of family relations and in the treatment of rural workers. Actually, far more than under patriarchalism, under paternalism, family relations were taken as a mirror of social relations at large. The kind of contractual reciprocity which informed relations between fathers and children in paternalistic families was held up as a model of relations between masters and laborers on the landed estates. Progressive planters and progressive landowners implemented the idea of contractual reciprocity, which was at the heart of the paternalistic ethos, in different ways. Still, there was a common ground between the two in the very concept of reciprocal rights and duties which both masters and workers were obliged to respect. In both cases, reciprocity gave new meanings to the ideological justification of inequalities between landed proprietors and workers. In both cases, the master’s search for consensus rather than the brutal application of power gave laborers new room for bargaining and a better chance of having their rights respected. However, similarly to what progressive planters did in the American South, progressive landowners in the Mezzogiorno used paternalistic ideology to mask a harsh exploitation of the laborers as they searched for higher returns in the production of valuable crops.

Patriarchalism, Paternalism, and Nationalism

The ideological differences related to patriarchalism and paternalism effectively prevented the landed elites of the two souths from joining in a successful nationalist movement before 1861. Unlike what occurred in South Carolina and Sicily, which were small and self-contained societies, in the larger context of the American South and of the Mezzogiorno there was very little interaction and mingling between the older and the newer sections of the two elites. Patriarchal planters and noblemen, and paternalistic planters and ennobled bourgeois, lived in separate worlds, and had
different ideas about social relations within the family and on the landed estates. This difference was also reflected in their political ideas, which, on the one hand, were close to eighteenth-century republicanism and enlightened autocracy in the case of patriarchs and, on the other hand, close to nineteenth-century liberalism in the case of paternalists. The spread of nationalist feelings in the two souths further confronted the landed elites with the challenge brought by one of the most powerful ideological products of modernization.\textsuperscript{145}

As specific ideologies of the ruling classes of the two souths, both patriarchalism and paternalism had the potential for becoming political creeds which lay the foundations of two modern nation-states. Indeed, at different points in time, they formed the main body of political ideologies which were propagated by specific national leaders as sets of values that should have informed social relations and justified the existence of truly national, elitistic cultures. The attempts at transforming patriarchalism and paternalism in two political creeds cut across race and class divisions in the American South, and class divisions in the Mezzogiorno, to construct ideologies which encompassed and justified the existence of inequalities in all aspects of social life. Born in the two social settings – the elite family and its landed estates – where power relations were ideologically defined in the nineteenth-century, patriarchalism and paternalism were transferred by a few exceptional national leaders from the local to the national level and embodied in their charismatic figures and values.

In both souths, patriarchalism was the ethos which characterized the oldest parts of the landed elites; as such, it was represented at the national level by conservative figures whose mindset followed the rules of aristocratic patriarchy prevalent in the eighteenth century. As a consequence, they believed in the preservation of the fundamental stability of the existing social order. At the same time, the influence of eighteenth-century enlightenment prompted them to implement programs of reform.

which, to a certain extent, were personalized versions of contemporary doctrines of enlightened autocracy. However, their attempt at transforming the patriarchal ethos into a national ideology of the ruling class clashed against the fact that, as national leaders, they never moved beyond representing a conservative minority of planters and nobles among the landed elites of the two souths.

In the American South, patriarchalism became a national ideology which justified inequalities of race and class with the rise to political power of the so-called “Virginian dynasty” of American presidents especially Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson (1743-1820) was a planter who belonged to the most distinguished part of the Virginian aristocracy; he owned around 10,000 acres of land and from one to two hundred slaves. He had been educated at William and Mary College and, according to Richard Hofstadter, “after graduation he fell into the expected pattern of the Virginian gentry, among whom political leadership was practically a social obligation”. 146 Jefferson rose to national prominence as a political leader -- together with several fellow Virginian aristocrats -- during the American Revolution; he played a crucial role in developing the ideology of freedom at the heart of the colonial struggle for independence from the British Empire. Thereafter, he continued to influence the political life of the nation through his leadership of the Democratic-Republican Party; he opposed the Federalist program for financial centralization and industrial development and supported, instead, the “virtuous independence” of farmers, “the chosen people by God” and the natural allies of the planter class. 147

Hailed as a champion of liberty in his own time, the author of the Declaration of Independence was at heart an elitist whose conservative ideas about the

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immutability of social roles made him the perfect national figure to transform the fundamental tenets of patriarchalism into a political ideology. Jefferson's very concept of a "natural aristocracy" of propertied gentlemen, born to rule and control the lower classes was much closer to the principles of enlightened autocracy than to egalitarianism. His political support of an agrarian republic, founded on the virtues of farmers was strictly related to the concept of "natural aristocracy", since in the rural society of the late eighteenth-century South – which Jefferson considered closest to the best possible worlds – the planter elite dominated the yeomen majority and slaves alike, whilst the function of the federal government was limited to the defense of the existing social order. 148

As in patriarchal families and on patriarchal plantations, where roles were permanently fixed according to a hierarchy of power, in the ideal agrarian republic of the patriarch Thomas Jefferson social relations were immutable. At the same time, the interpretation of the meaning of the inalienable rights to "liberty and the pursuit of happiness" varied according to the kind of talent and the amount of property every man was born with and which made him fit for a different level of the natural order. Therefore, Jeffersonian patriarchalism was an ideology which justified the inherent inequalities in society by restricting the number of those who were entitled to enjoy their inalienable rights. In its essence, it privileged white propertied males as the natural leaders of society, and excluded from power the poor, women, and slaves, whose social roles were deemed as inferior. 149

The most dramatic proof of Jefferson's commitment to patriarchal ideals was in his extremely ambiguous attitude toward slaves: on the one hand, he professed a hatred for slavery, which supposedly made him an early mild antislavery advocate; on the other hand, he was profoundly racist in his conviction of the inferiority of

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African Americans. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), Jefferson wrote that he believed that African Americans were “in reason much inferior [to the whites] ... and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”\(^{150}\) This judgement over the slaves’ mental capacity remained one of the most powerful proofs of their racial inferiority and an equally powerful justification for white domination. Jefferson’s mild antislavery attitude stemmed not so much from his conviction that slavery was wrong, but rather from the harm he believed it did to whites; contact with slavery corrupted white children by encouraging listlessness and condoning the exercise of tyranny. In order to avoid this, Jefferson supported a program of gradual emancipation and colonization, whose final aim was to remove all slaves from the South and transfer them to Africa.\(^{151}\)

As a patriarchal planter himself, Jefferson avoided contact with his racially exploited laborers, so not to be bothered with their problems, which he left to his overseers. Therefore, his idea of removing all causes for contact with slaves was the ultimate consequence of his desire to maintain the distance between him and his labor force, even at the cost of losing the benefits arising from its exploitation. Jefferson’s indictment of the racial inferiority of slaves, and his observations of the negative effect of their prolonged contact with the white race, appealed in particular way to the planter aristocracy, who found in these ideas the ideological bases of the patriarchal exploitation of their laborers raised at the level of national issues. However, even at the time of Jefferson’s presidency -- between 1800 and 1808 -- the ideologically informed minority of planters was extremely small and, even though influential, did not have enough support to enforce Jefferson’s view of the agrarian republic as the ideal world of patriarchal propertied gentlemen in the American South.


Thomas Jefferson’s patriarchalism can be fruitfully compared with the ideology of the Bourbon king Ferdinand I. At first, it would appear that there is little or nothing in common between a president considered as the champion of liberty and a monarch accused of being an absolutist despot. However, it is important to note that both national leaders took their first political steps in the exciting cultural atmosphere of the enlightenment, and both were originally enthusiastic about social reform. Moreover, as time went on, Jefferson’s and Ferdinand I’s attitudes toward change became increasingly conservative until their enlightened autocracy crystallized in a political version of the patriarchal ideology of their fellow landed aristocrats. Finally, both men lived in and personified an age of transition; like some of the patriarchal aristocrats that they represented, they were essentially eighteenth-century characters who rose to prominence in an age of revolutionary upheaval and continued to influence the political life of their nations well into the nineteenth century. To be sure, Ferdinand I was not nearly as complex and articulate as Thomas Jefferson in his thought and writings; however, his political interpretation of patriarchalism and the conservative involution of his ideology are sufficiently clear when one looks at the actions that characterized his kingdom.

Ferdinand I (1751-1825) was the second Bourbon monarch of the independent kingdom of Naples; he became king in 1759, when he was eight-years old, and until 1776 he ruled under the influence of the enlightened reformer Minister Tanucci. Throughout the first period of his kingdom, his commitment to enlightened autocracy was indisputable and resulted in mild reforms of the feudal system. After the French Revolution broke out and Napoleon rose to power, Ferdinand was forced to leave Naples and take refuge in Sicily twice, in 1798-1799 and in 1806-1815, because of revolutionary upheaval and French occupation. Ferdinand’s first return, in 1800, coincided with the first reactionary involution of his ideology, which accentuated the absolute power of the king over his subjects; consequently, he established a terrorist regime with arrests and executions. Ferdinand’s second return, in 1815, was more in line with the enlightened autocratic attitude of his monarchy. His desire to build an absolutist state was coupled with the continuation
of the reforms brought by the French occupation. However, his continuous reliance on the old aristocracy and the bureaucratic apparatus increasingly alienated him from the landed bourgeoisie, which always considered him the representative of a minority of the landed elite. 152

Ferdinand’s adherence to the patriarchal ethos, which informed the daily life and social relations of the Neapolitan nobility, was evident in all his political acts. During the best periods of his long reign, he considered himself as the chosen king of his people, whilst his subscription to programs of reform was part of his personal wish to be considered an enlightened autocrat. On the other hand, during the terrible times of political repression following the revolutionary upheavals, Ferdinand’s unchallenged authority allowed him to use the highest severity against those he considered enemies, and, therefore, an enemy of the nation. It was his strict adherence to the patriarchal principles that drove progressive nobles and liberal bourgeoisie away from Ferdinand I. At the same time, this adherence to patriarchalism ensured the support of the highest nobility of the kingdom, which saw in him the political representative of the ideology that informed social relations within their households and on their landed estates. 153

The immutability of social roles, which justified the absolute power of the patriarch/head of the household over his family and laborers, was transferred by Ferdinand I to a national level with his eighteenth-century conviction that the monarch was the source of authority, chosen by God, of the entire social order of the kingdom. At the same time, the detachment that characterized social relations under the patriarchal ethos was evident in Ferdinand’s carelessness about the welfare of the people in the city of Naples and in the provinces of the kingdom. For most of his life, the king lived either in his splendid royal palace in Caserta, which

152 Ferdinand’s reign was object of a damnatio memoriae by liberal historians, who represented either the landed bourgeoisie or the progressive part of the landed aristocracy. See, for example, the famous account by general Pietro Colletta, who was condemned to exile because of his liberal views, in P. Colletta, Storia del Reame di Napoli dal 1734 al 1825 (Milan, 1967; orig. pub. 1830); see also the more balanced view of Ferdinand’s reign in H. Acton, The Bourbons of Naples (1734-1825) (London: Methuen & Co., 1957).
was surrounded by gardens and far from the crowded capital with its starving and
dangerous lazzari. Equally eloquent in showing Ferdinand’s detached attitude
toward his subjects was his resolute decision to leave all the matters related to
political opposition in the hands of the secret police, which he deemed the most
competent office for such kind of problems. Ferdinand’s patriarchal detachment
from the government of the kingdom reached a dramatic climax with his continuous
betrayals of the word he had given during the frequent times of political upheaval.
Especially significant is his behavior regarding the amnesty he had promised on his
return after the 1799 Revolution and the promise of keeping the Constitution born
out of the Revolution of 1820 – which included greater participation of the landed
bourgeoisie in the political process. In both cases, Ferdinand’s violation of his
words led to cruel repression of political opposition, which thoroughly alienated
liberal support for his kingdom and prevented his version of patriarchalism from
becoming the core of the national ideology of a unified landed elite in the
Mezzogiorno. 155

In both souths, whereas patriarchalism was the ethos of the most aristocratic
fraction of the landed elite, the one still attached to eighteenth-century values,
paternalism was the ethos of a propertied class in ascendancy. As such, it was
represented at the national level by leaders who embraced nineteenth-century values
of contractual reciprocity which were characteristic of planters-in-the making in the
American South and landed bourgeois in the Mezzogiorno. National leaders who
represented the paternalistic ethos of the new propertied classes also shared their
commitment to modernization and to limited attempts at enforcing the
implementation of liberal ideas in society and politics. In this sense, they drew a
clear line of distinction between themselves and their patriarchal predecessors, a
distinction which their contemporaries clearly recognized and which gained them
the support of the majority of the landed elites.

154 Lazzari was the specific term used for the masses of urban poor in Naples.
The best example of a political leader representing the paternalistic ethos at the national level in the American South was Andrew Jackson (1767-1845). Born in the Carolinas, Jackson moved to the Tennessee frontier, where he made a fortune during the decades of expansion of the cotton economy and became a successful planter. At the same time, he trained as a lawyer and began a political career as a Tennessee representative in the U.S. Senate. Jackson rose to prominence as a national hero during the war of 1812, in which he gained a reputation as strong military man against both British invaders and Indians. Afterwards, he exploited his fame becoming the leader of the Democratic Party, whose supporters considered themselves the true inheritors of Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicanism. Jackson’s candidacy in the Democratic Party, whose ideology he helped to define, brought him to the presidency for two consecutive terms, between 1828 and 1836. As president, Jackson implemented a program — strictly related to his ideas about “democratic” government — of transforming paternalism into the national ideology of a unified slaveholding class, whose power was firmly founded on inequalities of race and gender.\textsuperscript{156}

Jackson believed himself a Jeffersonian, and took off where Jefferson had left in his elitist ideology. He believed that “distinctions in society will always exist under every just government ... Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth cannot be produced by human institutions.”\textsuperscript{157} There is no doubt he believed there existed a distinction between those who were fit to rule and those who were not. However, he saw this distinction mostly in terms of social factors, which brought education and wealth only to some, rather than in terms of innate differences. The truly brilliant innovation of Jacksonian democratic appeal lay in its potentially egalitarian implications. According to James Oakes, Jacksonians believed that “the only privileges recognized at birth were male gender and white skin, but among white

\textsuperscript{155}See A. Spagnoletti, \textit{Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie} (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 78-83.
men no laws recognized an artificial social hierarchy. The only legitimate distinctions were those of talent and merit."  

Yet, even given this egalitarian potential, Jacksonian democracy was the elitist ideology of an emerging planter class which refused the patriarchal values which justified the rule of a "natural aristocracy" and wholly embraced contractual reciprocity in political and social terms. Masked by egalitarian rhetoric, Jacksonian democracy merely "advocated [in principle] the equal opportunity of all white male citizens to engage in the pursuit of happiness", without real consequence at the practical level. Jackson's paternalism simply softened the terms of class inequalities by giving a token of appreciation to all southern white males in return for their social and political support of the planter class. With this unspoken agreement between him and his electors, Jackson managed to raise paternalism to the level of a national ideology cutting across class and regional differences through the implementation of contractual reciprocity as a means to keep power firmly in the hands of a national planter class. His "democratic" ideology certainly appealed to the common man, but not to women, since it discriminated along gender lines. However, it appealed even more strongly to the majority of slaveholders, who were "one-generation aristocrats" like Jackson, and who found themselves at ease with his rejection of the old planter aristocracy's assumption of the immutability of the existing social order.  

Jackson's paternalism and its relation to the political ethos of the newer section of the planter elite was particularly evident in his approach to slavery and race. The fact of being a cotton planter with a recently acquired fortune in land and slaves gave him a particularly sophisticated understanding of the workings of paternalism.
and contractual reciprocity as it applied to labor relations on plantations. Therefore, he was particularly well suited to the task of transforming slaveholders’ paternalism into a national ideology of defense of the southern slave system. Jackson’s “egalitarian” paternalism toward white common men could only coexist together with an equally racist paternalism which justified the exploitation of racially discriminated slaves; in the words of William Freehling, Jackson “epitomized the Herrenvolk South”, since he “assumed that Great White Fathers must forever guide childish blacks”. Slaveholders’ paternalism could not receive a clearer blessing than this. By borrowing from proslavery writers the idea of himself and the planters he represented as fathers taking care of “childish blacks”, Jackson managed to raise the fundamental assumptions at the heart of the paternalistic ethos to the level of complexity of a national ideology which justified slavery and the exploitation of African Americans as an inferior race.  

This factor contributed more than any other in creating a real chance for the formation of a national ideology of a unified slaveholding class under Andrew Jackson. This, in turn, could have been the first step toward the foundation of a southern slaveholding nation-state. The fact that this did not happen until 1861, with the creation of the Confederacy, testifies to the depth and salience of the ideological divisions between the old planter aristocracy, which recognized itself in Jefferson’s patriarchalism, and the entrepreneurial slaveownership which recognized itself in the “one-generation aristocrats” that Jackson represented. This fundamental division between the patriarchalism of an aristocratic minority and the paternalism of an entrepreneurial majority was the main reason for the failure of the movement for political nationalism in the American South before 1861.

In the Italian South, the national figure that came closest to embodying the paternalistic ethos and to transforming it into a national elitistic ideology was the Bourbon king Ferdinand II (1810-1859), whose achievements and failures made him one of the most controversial and debated characters in the history of the Mezzogiorno. As in the case of Andrew Jackson’s rise to prominence in the American South, the life and political career of Ferdinand II coincided with a period of unprecedented economic expansion in the Italian South. In the United States, material progress brought by the market revolution was connected by contemporary American writers to the new mass political participation and to the doctrines of Jacksonian democracy. In southern Italy, the accession to the throne and the early reign of the young Ferdinand II were hailed by contemporary writers and intellectuals as the start of a new era in economics and politics and as the triumph of liberal principles. 164

To draw a further comparison, in both cases a revolution against governmental centralization started from a peripheral area – South Carolina in the United States, and Sicily in the Mezzogiorno – and opened the eyes of the supporters of the two political leaders to the true nature of their use of power. After the resolution of the Nullification Crisis and of the 1848 Revolution through displays of force and armed intervention, both Andrew Jackson and Ferdinand II lost the support of two important groups within the two landed elites: those sections – particularly the ones located in South Carolinian and Sicily – that were jealous of governmental intervention in their internal affairs and stood ready to confront national leaders on the issue of legitimacy; and those sections that had embraced the reformist ideas of the two leaders at the moment of their rise to power, and that now were disenchanted by the governments’ arbitrary use of force, in blatant contrast with their supposed commitment to liberal principles. 165

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Certainly much more so than in Jackson’s case, Ferdinand II’s reign can be clearly divided between the period before and the period after the Revolution of 1848. During the period from 1830 to 1848, the Mezzogiorno witnessed the flourishing of governmental activity and support for various programs of reforms. The issue of economic improvement received particular attention with the participation of famous progressive economists -- such as Scialoja, Bianchini, Afan de Rivera, and others -- to specific governmental committees. Government-sponsored publications -- such as the Annali Civili -- promoted projects for land reclamation and improvement of agricultural techniques, whilst the Economic Societies of the Provinces enjoyed enormous prestige and importance. This radical change from previous Bourbon policies was seen as a result of the reformist spirit of the 20 year-old Ferdinand II, who, doubtless, had a personal agenda dealing with the modernization of the kingdom and the nationalization of the monarchy. In the words of a contemporary source, “agriculture and the other occupations ... lay in oblivion and darkness; they were called back to life by the wisdom of Ferdinand II ... the feelings of patriotism and care for the public good have awoken again”. 166

The meaning of Ferdinand II’s reform program lay in his attempt at gaining the support of the newer sections of the southern landed elite, an attempt which included the implementation of progressive economic policy and the consecration of paternalistic ideology at the national level. Under Ferdinand II, the kingdom’s administrative system allowed increasing room for action to the landed bourgeoisie over the nobility in the local government. At the same time, this resulted in a much more decisive presence of the state in local affairs, especially regarding the issues related to land reform. In governmental publications, Ferdinand II was presented as a benevolent father who superintended the process of reform and whose only concern was the welfare of his nation. According to Angelantonio Spagnoletti, an

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166 Quotation in Petrusewicz, Come il Meridione divenne una Questione: Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1998), 79-80; see also Croce, La patria napoletana, 83-110; and Lepre, Storia del Mezzogiorno, 137-163. See also Chapter Three on economic progress in the Mezzogiorno under Ferdinand II.
1834 issue of the *Annali Civili* showed how “the government of the kingdom ... had become with Ferdinand II a web of benevolent family relations; the king’s family itself was the metaphor of the nation, the mirror which reflected the qualities of the whole country.” 167

Ferdinand II’s paternalism was particularly pronounced in his relation with the lower classes of the kingdom, both in the capital and in the provinces. On the one hand, he professed to be close to the capital’s *lazzari*, since he had learned their dialect and had educated his sons to the simplicity of habits of the common people. Moreover, he had embarked on several journeys to the distant provinces of the kingdom, and the rhetoric surrounding the king’s trips in governmental publications presented them like visits that a father owed to his numerous children. However, in spite of the image spread by propaganda, in practice Ferdinand II did very little to alleviate the sufferings of his “children”. He implemented the idea of contractual reciprocity by rewarding the common people’s support of his monarchy with the impression he gave them of being close to the king and being part of the ideal family which supposedly formed the Bourbon state. However, he never intended to implement a program of land reform in order to improve the conditions of the peasants, who continued to be exploited. In fact, during his reign, the increasingly powerful landed bourgeoisie, supported by the kingdom’s administrative policy, committed continuous abuses in the expropriation of land and in the employment of usurious practices against the peasantry. 168

Ferdinand II’ reformists attempt appealed particularly to the new class of landed proprietors, that formed the majority of the landed elite of the *Mezzogiorno*; his support for the landed bourgeoisie and its entrepreneurial impulse rewarded him with institutional stability and economic progress. More importantly, up until the 1840s, Ferdinand II had a real chance of transforming the southern kingdom into a modern nation-state. His transformation of the paternalistic ethos of the landed

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bourgeoisie into a state ideology constituted a big step ahead in the construction of the political ideology of a national ruling class. However, even though the landed bourgeoisie effectively formed the majority of the ruling class, it was by no means capable of imposing its idea of the nation-state over the old nobility, which was still very strong in several areas. Therefore, the opposition between the two sections of the landed elite, which manifested in the difference between patriarchalism and paternalism as national political ideologies, prevented the continuation of Ferdinand II’s experiment which finally collapsed during the 1840s. As the reformist programs lost momentum, the landed bourgeoisie withdrew its support from the king, economic improvement ceased, and the kingdom was shaken by a series of revolts in the provinces. The Revolution of 1848 witnessed the landed bourgeoisie’s last attempt at realizing its nationalist program through a coup; the repression that followed and Ferdinand II’s return to an absolutist concept of monarchy and patriarchalistic practices alienated once and for all the progressive and entrepreneurial part of the southern landed elite from the Bourbon dynasty. 169

In both souths, particularly charismatic national leaders managed to transfer the ideologies at the heart of the patriarchal ethos and of the paternalistic ethos, shared by different sections of the propertied classes, to the level of national politics. In doing so, they lay the foundations for the construction of an ideology of “elitist nationalism” and of a modern nation-state in their respective regions. As Benedict Anderson has noted, while nationalism is a language of inclusion, racism is a language of exclusion; whereas nationalism assimilates into the “imagined community” which constitutes the nation, racism excludes on the basis of supposed biological differences. 170 However, in both souths, the kind of nationalisms that the two elites produced when their political leaders attempted to transfer patriarchal and

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paternalistic ideologies to a political dimension were based on elitism and exclusion of a large majority of the population from power. In the American South, both patriarchal and paternalistic interpretations of nationalism were firmly grounded in the belief of the superiority of the white race, of the male gender, and of the landless masses. Even Jacksonian “democracy” did not challenge these fundamental assumptions, but actually reinforced the racial and gender divide, at the same time masking the justification of social inequalities through a paternalistic rhetoric. In the *Mezzogiorno*, patriarchal and paternalistic interpretations of nationalism did not have come to terms with the presence of a different race. However, neither did they have to justify the power of propertied men over women and landless peasants, since social inequalities were far more taken for granted than in the American South. Ferdinand II’s paternalistic version of nationalism was as far as the justification of exclusion from power could go in the Italian South. As in the American proslavery argument, the fundamental assumption behind its rhetoric was that the higher classes were like fathers taking care of the lower classes, which were like children, even though they were not racially discriminated against.

However, the particularly exclusivist discourse of elitist nationalism in the two souths did not stop with the justification of the class, race, and gender barriers which made the very existence of the elites possible. It worked as a discourse of exclusion within the elites themselves, and it built on their already deep ideological divisions. The patriarchal version of nationalism, with its emphasis on aristocratic values, and the paternalistic version of nationalism, with its stress of contractual reciprocity, mutually excluded each other. In turn, this exclusion meant the exclusion of the landed entrepreneurs from the patriarchal idea of the nation-state, and the exclusion of old aristocrats from the paternalistic idea of the nation-state. However, since they constituted the majority of the two landed elites in both souths, paternalistic planters and landowners were the ones with the only true chance of transforming their ethos into the political ideology of the ruling elite of a southern nation. Moreover, their progressive outlook and their belief in nineteenth-century values made them more in tune with their time than patriarchal aristocrats. Still
anchored to the world of the eighteenth century, patriarchal planters and noblemen
did not manage to cope with the nationalist appeal as well as paternalistic
landowners and slaveowners. Whilst patriarchalism continued to be the ideology of
a restricted aristocracy, paternalism had a true potential for becoming the political
creed of a national landed elite in both souths. However, the opposition between the
advocates of the two different world-views prevented paternalistic political leaders
from unifying the ruling classes of the two souths. At the same time their nationalist
rhetoric exacerbated the already deep divisions within the two southern elites, and it
had the effect of ensuring that no political formation could ever become viable in
the two souths unless there was a genuine consensus within the ruling classes.
Therefore, in contrast to what took place in South Carolina and Sicily, in the two
souths as a whole nationalism prevented the construction of a ruling ideology that
represented the entire landed elite and which effectively justified and explained the
reasons for its political and social power over the masses in the context of the
making of a modern nation-state.
Chapter Five
The Great Synthesis:
Elitist Nationalism in South Carolina and Sicily

Nationalism proved successful in South Carolina and Sicily for several reasons. Both regions were relatively small and self-contained with distinctive features in their social structures which set them off from the rest of the souths. Their elites were more homogenous than in other southern regions because they managed to resolve their internal conflicts through a series of crucial compromises, notably the ones that provided the background for the Constitution of 1808 in South Carolina and the Constitution of 1812 in Sicily. As a result, in 1860, South Carolina and Sicily were led into nationalist wars by two landed elites who had forged internal consensus around the need to preserve their social and political privileges intact.

While in the rest of the two souths ideological differences prevented old patriarchs and new paternalists from mixing and forming a homogenous and compact landed elite, in South Carolina and Sicily there were peculiar historical conditions, most notably the “insular” character of the two regional cultures, that made possible the formation of a unified ruling class. The landed elites of South Carolina and Sicily showed an unusual degree of mixture between newer and older sections through intermarriage, and this mixture was reflected in their ideological outlook. Several old aristocrats embraced the paternalistic ethos and joined with new planters and landed bourgeoisie in constituting an effective regional ruling elite. Old and new sections of the landed elites together managed to establish economic and political hegemony over South Carolina and Sicily. They used their hegemonic role to guide the process of nation-state formation in the two regions, inventing a peculiar tradition of “elitist nationalism”. ¹

The power and the homogeneity of the landed elites of South Carolina and Sicily are particularly evident in the transformations of the urban layout of Charleston and

¹ For the definition of “elitist nationalism”, see the Introduction. See also E.J.Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
Palermo. The two cities bear permanent marks of the two landed elites' modification of the landscape of the city to their own advantage through selection of particular areas for residence and through the building of large mansions as a means to display wealth. Furthermore, the two elites used architectural symbolism to link their ideology of power to the process of nation-state formation in the two regions. The origins of distinctive architectural languages in the elites' mansions at the beginning of the nineteenth century were clearly tied to the first instances of "elitist nationalism" in both South Carolina and Sicily. The heyday of the Greek Revival style in South Carolina during the 1830s and of the Neoclassical style in Sicily in the 1790s was related to the elites' first assertion of a distinctive national culture through their political struggles with their respective national government. In both cases, the architectural styles epitomized the elites' commitment to their nationalist programs and to their willingness to struggle to transform into a political reality what was already a fact in cultural and social terms. 2

The Social Origins of Elitist Nationalism

Within the two souths, South Carolina and Sicily were the two regions where nationalist feelings were strongest throughout the nineteenth century. South Carolina led the American South into Civil War in 1860, but its political elite had been prepared to abandon the Union as early as the Nullification crisis of 1832, and during the first Secession crisis of 1850. In Italy, Sicily's elite, in particular its western section, produced a movement which called for separation from the southern Kingdom during the Revolution of 1820, again during the Revolution of 1848, and during the events that led to Unification in 1860. 3

2 On the links between eighteenth and nineteenth-century architecture and ideology, see D. J. Olsen, "The City as a Work of Art" in D. Fraser and A. Sutcliffe, eds., The Pursuit of Urban History (London: Macmillan, 1983); for details on the South Carolinian and Sicilian examples, see below.
Whereas programs of economic nationalism, publicly and privately supported, failed to develop into political movements encompassing the two souths before 1861, the diffuse nationalist sentiments present in South Carolina and Sicily evolved into complex political ideologies long before Secession and Unification occurred. In other words, whilst a wider and more general southern nationalism failed to gather the elites around common economic and political problems, specific South Carolinian and Sicilian nationalisms did succeed in doing so. The reasons for this success are multifaceted and have much to do with the peculiar historical development of the elites of the two regions between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

Throughout these three centuries South Carolina and Sicily shared with the rest of their souths a peripheral position in the world-economy; however, for most of this time they were also at the periphery of the two southern regions. Sicily was geographically detached from the continental Mezzogiorno, so that it formed a separate entity on the border of southern Italian civilization in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, South Carolina was a region at the periphery of the Southern colonies in America until the settlement of the cotton growing regions in the 1830s. The isolation that characterized the historical trajectory of South Carolina and Sicily before 1860 allowed them to develop peculiar social institutions that set them apart from the rest of the souths and formed the background for the actions of the two nationalist elites.

It could be argued that South Carolina and Sicily before 1860 were “insular” societies because of their historical isolation. The term “insular” comes from Frontier Studies and applies to those colonies that were more successful in evolving into indigenous systems with few social and political ties to the mother country and with economics based on the production of competitive goods in the world-market. The “insularity” of these type of frontiers manifested itself in a two-way process by which, on one hand, the colonies became more isolated in political terms, and, on
the other hand, they became more dependent on metropolitan demand for particular goods. This process occurred at the periphery of the world-economy and it resulted in the creation of "insular" societies -- such as South Carolina and Sicily -- characterized by a distinctive political culture and by dependence on the production and sale of raw materials to core or semiperipheral regions. 4

South Carolina’s and Sicily’s “dependence elites” accumulated their fortunes producing and selling cash-crops in the world-market and, at the same time, controlled the political and social realms in a situation of relative isolation from external influence. The peculiar social structure that emerged from the process of “insularity” resulted in the polarization of power in the hands of a small minority of extremely wealthy landowners, who were the political representatives of half the population of the region, and who exploited the other half through particular forms of agricultural labor. 5

As illustrated in the table below, the population of South Carolina and Sicily involved in agricultural activities in 1840 can be broadly divided in two groups: free whites and slaves in South Carolina, and landowners and peasants in Sicily. Slaves constituted little more than half of the total population of South Carolina, while peasants made up more than one third of the workforce in Sicily. This statistical information helps us understand why fear of slave revolt in South Carolina, like fear of peasant revolt in Sicily, were instrumental in forging a union among the upper classes of the two regions.

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5 On the role of “dependence elites” in peripheral regions of the world-economy, see P. Schneider, J.
The Populations of South Carolina and Sicily around 1840

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Carolina</th>
<th>Sicily</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Total Population]</td>
<td>[Workforce]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowners ca. 400,000 (30.7 %)</td>
<td>ca. 1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Population ca. 300,000 (42.8 %)</td>
<td>Other occupations 6 ca. 400,000 (30.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves ca. 400,000 (58.2 %)</td>
<td>Peasants ca. 500,000 (38.5 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population ca. 700,000 7</td>
<td>Workforce</td>
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</tbody>
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The free population of South Carolina was divided within itself between those who owned slaves (26,700, or 3.8 per cent) and those who did not; among the former, planters (owners of 20 or more slaves) were only 10,500, or 1.5 per cent of the total population. 9 If we assume that social and political power depended on the number of slaves owned in South Carolina and on the amount of land owned in Sicily, then we can compare South Carolinian planters with Sicilian noblemen. The Sicilian nobility included both noblemen who belonged to old aristocratic families and recently ennobled landed bourgeoisie. Together, they formed a group of about 46,000 individuals, only 2.6 per cent of the total population. Together, they owned more than a third of the total land on the island. 10

Schneider, and E. Hansen, “Modernization and Development: the Role of Regional Elites and Non-Corporate Groups in the Mediterranean”, Comparative Studies in Society and History 14 (1972); see also Chapter Three.

6 Categories included under “other occupations” are priests and nuns, artisans and fishermen.

7 Source: approximations based on J. Barnwell, Love of Order: South Carolina’s First Secession Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), Table 1, 7.

8 Source: approximations based on D. Demarco, Il crollo del Regno delle Due Sicilie. Vol. I: La struttura sociale (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli, 1960), Table 3, 188. The data on Sicily’s workforce include only the occupational groups listed in the official statistics of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies between 1834 and 1843. In 1838, the total population of Sicily was around 1,936,970 people; see G. Cingari, “Gli ultimi Borboni”, in R. Romeo, ed., Storia della Sicilia. Vol. VIII (Naples: Società editrice storia del Mezzogiorno continentale e della Sicilia, 1977), 31.

9 Source in G. P. Germany, The South Carolina Governing Elite, 1820-1860” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1972), 64.

10 Source in A. Signorelli, “Elites e classi sociali nella Sicilia preunitaria” in F. Pillitteri, ed.,
In spite of being such small groups, planters and noblemen held most of the political and social power in the two regions. By no means were they like closed castes, though. Throughout the modern history of South Carolina and Sicily, newcomers mingled with long established families, and old and new sections of the elites together reshaped several times the social boundaries of power. While in South Carolina the newer self-made planters of the upcountry established ties with the older aristocratic families of the lowcountry, in Sicily the families of the new landed bourgeoisie mixed with the old noble families and often acquired noble titles. Although this process took a long time and did not occur smoothly, the final result was the creation of a strong and relatively homogenous landed elite in both regions.

In South Carolina, by the first half of the nineteenth century, families such as the Hamptons, the Chesnuts, and the Hammonds, who belonged to the upcountry “cotton” gentry, were fully recognized as part of the same ruling elite by lowcountry “rice” aristocrats, such as the Manigault, the Izard, and the Heyward. The alliance between upcountry gentry and lowcountry aristocracy was helped by the celebration of several marriages between members of different clans, such as the famous matrimony between Rebecca Chesnut and James S. Deas, who belonged to a branch of the Izard family. ¹¹

In Sicily, a similar phenomenon occurred throughout the eighteenth century and especially during the period 1800-1860, when families of the wealthy landed bourgeoisie, such as the Turrisi Colonna, the Riso, and the Tasca, either bought or were given by the King a noble title, and therefore were recognized as members of the titled aristocracy by the oldest noble families, such as the Trabia, the Monteleone, and the Paternò. As in the case of South Carolina, the alliance

¹¹ See Germany, “The South Carolina Governing Elite”, 176-178; Germany notes that “the intermarriage of important families on a local scale was one of the earliest and basic forms of alliance within the governing class. By the second or third generation the practice resulted in marriage within one’s near kin, and the formation of a political dynasty within a close family group.” (169) See also R. H. Taylor, Antebellum South Carolina: A Social and Cultural History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942).
between the old and the new part of the landed elite was sanctioned through a series of marriages, such as the one between the “bourgeois” Lucio Mastrogiovanni Tasca and the “noble” Beatrice Lanza e Branciforte, Princess of Trabia; in consequence of the marriage, Tasca, who descended from a family of *gabellotti* of Mistretta -- in the northeastern part of Sicily -- became Count of Almerita.\(^{12}\)

The reasons for the strength and homogeneity of the South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites are related to the patterns of their historical formations. At the time in which they were incorporated in the world-economy, during the seventeenth and the sixteenth centuries respectively, South Carolina and Sicily were “insular societies” in formation; at that moment their colonial elites rose to power through the production and sale of particular crops -- rice and wheat -- in the world-market. Both South Carolina and Sicily were at the frontier of the expansion of the world-economy and their rising elites seized the opportunities created by the expansion of the wheat and rice markets. A similar process occurred again at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when new elites rose to power through the production and sale of other, more valuable products, such as cotton and citrus. By this time, both South Carolina and Sicily were “insular societies” with the descendants of the former colonial elites in power. In both cases, a compromise based on the recognition of the importance of the newcomers resolved the conflicts between older and newer sections of the elites. In both cases, the compromise involved the recognition of the social status of the newcomers and their formal acceptance into the ranks of the political ruling elite through the drafting of a Constitution; in South Carolina, the Constitution of 1808 opened parliamentary representation to the upcountry gentry and balanced the political power of the lowcountry aristocracy in the administration of the state, while in Sicily, the Constitution of 1812 abolished the feudal privileges

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\(^{12}\) According to Marcello Verga, the Sicilian aristocracy continued to exercise a political, social, and cultural hegemony on the island because of its readiness “to absorb among its ranks ... the rising elements of the local bourgeoisie ... well beyond the mid-nineteenth century”; see M. Verga, “Il ‘Settecento del baronaggio’. L’aristocrazia siciliana tra politica e cultura” in F. Benigno and C. Torrisi, eds., *Elites e potere in Sicilia dal medievo ad oggi* (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1995), 88. On the absorption of bourgeois families into the titled Sicilian aristocracy, see O. Cancila, *Palermo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1988), 9-21; for more details on Lucio Mastrogiovanni Tasca’s family, see below.
held by the old nobility and recognized the importance of the landed bourgeoisie in
the formation of the regional government.\textsuperscript{13}

From the time they settled in the lowcountry, South Carolinian planters, most of
whom came from Barbados, created a frontier society which closely resembled
seventeenth-century Europe in the clear distinction between the propertied
aristocracy and the lower classes. In 1660, Charles II gave a substantial land grant
in the Carolinas to eight of his major supporters, who came to be called the Lord
Proprietors; they planned to implement John Locke's Fundamental Constitutions,
which guaranteed religious freedom, but provided for a stratified, hereditary local
nobility.\textsuperscript{14} With this experience in mind, when they colonized the lowcountry and
founded new villages, South Carolinian planters implemented a model of social
organization founded on rigid class divisions. In these new settlements, planters
became immediately recognized as those who held the power and the authority over
the entire community. Since most of them came from Barbados, where they were
used to a luxurious life-style and to owning immense plantations with hundreds of
slaves, South Carolinian planters were much more apt to create a distinctively
aristocratic society than their counterparts in Virginia and Maryland.\textsuperscript{15} Unlike
what occurred in the Chesapeake, in South Carolina, planters declared slavery
hereditary soon after their arrival and continued the tradition of primogeniture and
entail for a longer time; by 1696, a special "slave code" restricted the freedom of
any person of color and sanctioned the enslavement of Africans for lifetime.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} For more details on the Constitutions of 1808 and 1812, see below.
\textsuperscript{14} According to the 1669 Fundamental Constitutions, South Carolina was to be divided in provinces,
counties, seigniories, baronies, and precincts; moreover, the Constitutions prescribed the creation of
two noble titles, the \textit{landgrave} and the \textit{cacique}; see R. Weir, Colonial South Carolina: A History
(New York: KTO Press, 1983), 54-58. See also Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{15} On the Caribbean origins of South Carolinian planters, see J. P. Greene, “Colonial South Carolina
and the Caribbean Connection”, \textit{South Carolina Historical Magazine} 88 (1987), 192-210; and R. S.
Dunn, Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713 (New
York: Norton, 1973), 111-116; and P. A. Coclanis, The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and
13-26.
\textsuperscript{16} On the 1696 slave codes, see P. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from
1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York: Norton, 1974), 144-147; see also D. C. Littlefield,
These social changes went hand in hand with the changes in the landscape brought by the booming rice economy. Everywhere they went in the lowcountry, South Carolinian planters transformed the swamps into rice plantations worked by a large number of African slaves. The plantation frontier that stretched up and down the coast of South Carolina and Georgia was formed by settlements characterized by the same pattern: rows of rice fields along the two sides of the rivers punctuated by the presence of large residential mansions. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the scale of the agricultural enterprises and the luxury of the big houses clearly indicated that the rice aristocracy of South Carolina was the richest and the most refined in the Old South. 17

Within the space of fifty years, South Carolinian planters managed to create a distinctive aristocratic way of life, based on the particular kind of agriculture associated with rice planting and on the particular kind of environment present in the lowcountry. Since the swamplands were unhealthy during the hot summer months, planters spent more than half the year in their town houses in Charleston, acting as absentee landowners and slaveowners. 18 South Carolinian planters, unlike others in the South, had a unique relationship with the metropolis; Charleston’s urban life was the other side of the coin of their plantation realm. The time spent in the city created a strong social cohesion among planters, encouraging interaction and forging a sense of identity through participation in the same cultural activities and political debates and through promotion of the same economic interests. During the summer season, when malaria infested plantations in the lowcountry, planters

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flocked to Charleston, where they replicated their plantation life-style in the city, surrounded by black servants in big white houses with porticos, facing the fashionable area of the “Battery”, where ladies and gentlemen met for the evening walk. As the eighteenth century progressed, Charleston rapidly became both a fashionable city and a cultural center, with concerts, plays, exhibitions and lectures, where the members of the rice-growing elite met and exchanged ideas on economy, society and politics. 19

When farmers colonized the inner part of South Carolina between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, they started to grow cotton with the help of slaves. However, cotton remained relatively unprofitable until the invention of the cotton gin in 1793; soon after, cotton planting boomed, and cotton planters became among the richest individuals in the state. The frontier of the world-economy had shifted by this time, and the new elite seized the opportunities provided by the expansion of the cotton market much like the old elite had done almost 150 years before. Like rice planters in the lowcountry, cotton planters transformed the upcountry founding a series of settlements characterized by the presence of large plantations worked by slaves and centered around the big houses. 20

Cotton planters imitated the rice barons in trying to create an aristocratic society that resembled the one in the lowcountry where the plantations were the center of economic and social power. Unlike rice planters, cotton planters were resident and did not gather in a large cultural center like Charleston, even though it might be argued that Columbia performed a similar function in the upcountry. Their civilization and their habits were very different from the ones of the lowcountry.

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However, in time, the differences smoothed, the two elites mingled, and Charleston became a point of cultural reference for both cotton and rice planters, while Columbia was declared capital of the state in 1816. According to historian Rollin Osterweis, during the antebellum period, “socially, there was no wall between the rice, indigo, and later on the cotton planters who came in Charleston for some city life.” Charleston provided a city with traditions, where planters from both lowcountry and upcountry could meet and exchange their ideas, while enjoying the cultural activities that the city offered, especially during the summer season. In time, this habit created a strong bond among the upper class and led to the notion of being a homogenous regional elite with characteristics that set it apart from the rest of the South and made it fit to rule South Carolina as national state in its own right.

The key moment in the interaction between South Carolina’s old and new aristocracies was the Compromise of 1808. Throughout the colonial and revolutionary period, the rice aristocracy had limited the political representation of the upcountry because they saw them as socially and culturally inferior. The result had been expressed in three consecutive constitutions, the last of which written in 1790. At that time, there were no planters and very few slaves in the

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24 In the nineteenth century there still were a few cases of prejudice by lowcountry aristocrats against upcountry planters. In her diary, Mary Chesnut tells the story of a lowcountry lady, who remarked
upcountry. However, everything changed with the cotton boom, which led to the rise of hundreds of planters and a significant increase in the slave population. Soon, the upcountry planters held the power to ask for an amendment of the Constitution of 1790. 25

The Constitution was amended in 1808 with the creation of a Senate of 45 seats and a house of 124. While the lowcountry had control over the senate, where the number of representatives went together with the number of election districts, the upcountry held control over the house, where the number of representatives went together with the number of people. The compromise instituted a balance of power between the two sections of the elite; from that moment on they acted as part of the same government, defending the same interests in case of social and political crisis. To make sure that the government rested in the hands of the now united aristocracy, the legislature retained the restrictions on the property qualifications necessary to sit in the House and in the Senate. Although by 1810 there was universal white male suffrage, this pertained only to the election of local officials. All the executive officers and the other important officials at state level were chosen by the legislature, and the membership in the legislature was effectively restricted to planters. 26

The expansion of cotton production had made possible the formation of a new planter elite in the Upcountry. In only a few decades the cotton planters had managed to accumulate large amounts of wealth and become a serious political

"the up-country are a new people, it seems. The blood of the cavalier stays near the salt water." See C. Van Woodward, ed., Mary Chesnut's Civil War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 217.


26 See Klein, Unification of a Slave State, 247-256; and Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism, 106-108. According to Ford, "the compromise of 1808 established a de facto balance of power between the Upcountry and the Lowcountry. The Lowcountry, with the help of the senators from black-majority districts along the fall line, controlled the senate, while the Upcountry enjoyed a comfortable majority in the house of representatives." (106). See also W. W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 220-223; Banner, "The Problem of South Carolina", 69-71; W. A. Schaper, "Sectionalism and Representation in South Carolina", Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1900 (Washington, DC, 1901), 379-395; and F. M. Green, Constitutional Development in the South Atlantic States, 1776-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1930), 120-123.
threat to the hegemony of the Charleston-based rice aristocracy over the South Carolina legislature. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cotton elite dominated the rapidly expanding population in the upcountry and controlled the local politics of the increasingly important city of Columbia. And yet, in the words of David Moltke-Hansen, “as planter interests and leadership came to dominate the Upcountry ... the Lowcountry planters found it easier to compromise ... on renewed Upcountry demands for representation.”  

27 The Compromise of 1808 gave the upcountry cotton planters an equal share in the legislature and in the state politics of South Carolina. Thereafter, the intermarriages between families belonging to the lowcountry rice aristocracy and families belonging to the upcountry cotton elite built an even stronger alliance between the two at the level of local politics.  

28 By the time the Nullification Crisis started in 1828, a few families dominated local politics in every county and district of the state, families that had economic interests both in the lowcountry and in the upcountry (see Appendix, Fig. 3). The representatives of these families were the most likely to access to the most prestigious political office of the state, the Governorship. By 1842, upcountry nouveau riche James Henry Hammond could compete with lowcountry aristocrat Robert Allston for the Governorship of the State; this fact is perhaps the clearest indication of what Moltke-Hansen has called “the transition from a lowcountry to a statewide plantation economy and [political] leadership” in South Carolina.  

29 This process is at the heart of South Carolina’s peculiar version of “elitist nationalism”, an ideology which served the purpose of solidifying the South Carolina ruling elite through the invention of a nationalist tradition. The planters’ acceptance of the “elitist nationalist” ideology was not automatic, rather it went through a series of conflicts between opposing factions, such as Nullificationists and Unionists during 

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28 See Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, 19-21.
the Nullification Crisis of 1828-1834. However, the final result was that in 1860 South Carolina presented a homogeneous and unified ruling class ready to lead the state in secession and war against the federal government’s threat of abolishing slavery, which was the basis of planters’ power.  

As in the case of South Carolina, the process of formation of the elite in Sicily was long and went through different phases. Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the Sicilian nobility underwent important changes. Several families who had worked their way up from the ranks of the commercial and bureaucratic bourgeoisie were ennobled. Most of them at this time had few lands and little power to speak of; however, they soon became promoters of a movement of internal colonization of the island, which made them immensely powerful. The new nobles sought and obtained from the Spanish king the permission to found new villages (*licentia populandi*) in the inner parts of Sicily, where population density was low and where wheat could be grown extensively. When they founded a village, the nobles usually acquired the title of “prince” and the absolute authority and power (*miro e mesto imperio*) over the village and its inhabitants. Therefore, several new villages became linked to the new prestigious noble titles of members of a rising wheat-growing elite, as in the case of the newly-founded Trabia, the western Sicilian town for which the Lanza obtained the principate in 1601. 

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The massive interior colonization, which involved several thousands settlers, was
due to the concurrent opposition of the new nobility to the old one and to the
expansion of the wheat market in the world-economy.  All around the new
villages, the princes had *latifondi* where their subject peasants grew wheat for
commercial exchange. At the center of the territory granted to each prince there was
a small settlement with a palace, a church, and a prison -- permanent symbols of the
authority and power of the feudal lord. Throughout the lands where the
phenomenon of internal colonization occurred, there was a similar pattern of
settlement with feudal palaces surrounded by wheat-growing *latifondi*. By the
beginning of the eighteenth century the new princes had been able to acquire
fantastic wealth through the production and sale of wheat, obscuring the old
nobility and rapidly becoming the most powerful social and economic group of the
island. Families whose fortunes had been tightly linked to the seventeenth century
internal colonization of the island, such as the Lanza of Trabia, the Notarbartolo of
Sciara, the Tommasi of Palma, had become enormously influential in the viceroyal
administration. Moreover, through a careful policy of marriage with the oldest
sections of the nobility, they had become feudal owners of several villages and
*latifondi*, scattered all over Sicily. 

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32 On the relation between the foundation of new villages and the rise to power of the lesser nobility, see G. Giarrizzo, “La Sicilia dal viceregno al regno”, in R. Romeo, ed., *Storia della Sicilia*. Vol. VI, 90-95. See also O. Cancila, *Baroni e popolo nella Sicilia del grano* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1983); according to Cancila, “the 400 feudal lords ... all recently ennobled ... led the movement for the colonization and foundation of new villages in the island ... [a movement] which is the response ... of the new feudal class to the old one and its privileges” (163).


34 Among the feudal families who had been promoters of the internal colonization of Sicily, the Lanza, the Settiomo, the Alliata, and the Cottone were recently-ennobled bourgeois who had risen among the 30 most powerful clans of the island by the beginning of the seventeenth century; see Cancila, *Baroni e popolo*, 118-119. Through a successful marriage policy, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Lanza, who were Princes of Trabia, had become also Princes of Scordia, Butera, and Leonforte; for details, see F. Palazzolo Drago, *Famiglie nobili siciliane* (S.G. La Punta, 1995). On the marriage strategies of new and old nobility, see F. Gallo, *L’alba dei Gattopardi. La formazione della classe dirigente nella Sicilia austriaca (1719-1734)* (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri, 1996), 159-162.
During this process, the nobility redefined their identity as a truly "national" aristocracy with a unique way of life related to the particular kind of agricultural system based on the wheat-grown *latifondi* present in the inner parts of Sicily.  

In the first half of the eighteenth century, nobles started to neglect the management of their estates, which they left in the hands of *amministratori* and *gabellotti*, preferring to live like rentiers in Palermo. Although this phenomenon resembles what took place in the continental South with nobles flocking to Naples, an important difference lies in the fact that rather than being from different southern regions, the nobles who gathered in Palermo were all Sicilians. Therefore, it can be argued that although the abandonment of the feudal estates had a detrimental effect on the economy of Sicily, residence in the city favored contact and interaction among Sicilian nobles. Akin to the effect that Charleston had on South Carolinian planters, Palermo’s urban environment, with its cultural life and lively political debates, helped forge a sense of identity in the Sicilian nobility. Throughout the eighteenth century, Palermo retained its prominence in politics, as seat of the viceroyal power, and in economics, as center of the Sicilian wheat trade. Wheat-growing nobles had built magnificent villas in the surroundings of the city, where they went to enjoy the lively cultural life and to meet with other members of the elite at particular social occasions, where they could often exchange views on the social and political situation of the island.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a true economic revolution took place when wheat ceased to be the primary Sicilian product for export, replaced by sulfur, citrus, and wine. Some of the princes adapted quickly to the changes and either used

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35 On the peculiar characteristics of the eighteenth century wheat-growing nobility in Sicily, see Gallo, *La alba dei Gattopardi*, 147-162; and Verga, “Il ‘settecento del baronaggio’, 87-102

36 For a description of eighteenth-century Palermo as a social and cultural center for the aristocracy, see G. Pitre, *La vita in Palermo cento e più anni fa* (Palermo, 1904); see also Gallo, *L'alba dei Gattopardi*, 222-227. For first-hand accounts on the daily life of Sicilian aristocrats and their views on politics and society in the eighteenth century, see H. Tuzet, *Viaggatori stranieri in Sicilia nel XVIII secolo* (Palermo. Sellerio, 1988), 335-354. At the end of the eighteenth century, the viceroy of Sicily Domenico Caracciolo, sent by the King of Naples, tried to fight the feudal power of the wheat-growing nobility, without obtaining any result other than being instrumental in the formation of a unity among Sicilian nobles against intrusion from outside. See F. Renda, *Baroni e riformatori in Sicilia sotto il ministero Caracciolo (1786-1789)* (Messina. La Libra, 1974); E. Pontieri, *Il*
the lands of their *latifondì* to move into the production of citrus or wine or, if they had been lucky enough to discover it, sulfur.\(^{37}\) However, generally speaking, the new products were associated with the advance of a new class of landed proprietors, a group that was in control of the production of commercial crops and who traditionally came from the ranks of the *amministratori* and *gabelloti*. Since the nobles lived like absentee landlords, the *amministratori* and *gabelloti*, who had been placed in charge of the nobles’ properties, were able to exploit the situation and grow rich by renting the nobles’ lands to the peasants at particularly usurious rates. Typical was the case of Nicolò Turrisi Colonna, the grandfather of Baron Turrisi Colonna, who was a *gabelloto* in care of the lands of a noble family at Castelbuono, and who became rich practicing usury. His son and grandson built a fortune on his initial capital, practicing commercial agriculture and becoming major producers of citrus. By the first half of the nineteenth century, Nicolò, the Baron and grandson of the original Nicolò, was one of the wealthiest landed proprietors in Sicily and one of the leading political figures of the new landed aristocracy.\(^{38}\)

Most of the new landed aristocrats like Turrisi Colonna were landed bourgeois whose fathers or grandfathers had started their careers administering the feudal estates of some prince. After they had managed to reach the highest positions in society, their fathers also secured recognition of their status by obtaining a noble title, usually the one of *baroni*. Unlike the princes, the *baroni* tended to be resident on their lands and to manage them directly, rather than through *gabelloti* or *amministratori*. Since commercial agriculture centered around citrus and wine was located along the coast, the *baroni*’s possessions tended to cluster in regions like

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the Conca d'Oro around Palermo, the region around Trapani and Marsala in the west (see Appendix, Fig. 4), and the Piana di Catania in the eastern part of Sicily. As in South Carolina, there was a genuine cultural difference between the princes and the *baroni*, and their mutual antagonism was focused both on ideological and social issues. An 1894 pamphlet on the social question in Sicily, written by somebody close to the old nobility, describes with a certain disdain, even at such a late date, the difference between *baroni* and nobles: “The richest proprietors in the island, called ‘baroni’ and clearly distinguished from the inheritors of the ancient families of the Princes, come from the class of the *massarioti* \(^{40}\), who have then become rich, acquiring the *latifondi*, where they used to keep their houses.” \(^{41}\) The tone in which this observation was written is such that it is not difficult to imagine that the old nobility saw the new landed aristocracy as displaying too much concern for profit and too little concern for tradition. Still, it was thanks to the entrepreneurial activity of *barons* like Turrisi Colonna, Tasca, and Riso, who truly represented the meeting of the old with the new, that Sicilian agriculture developed new techniques and reached high standards of productivity in commercial agriculture. \(^{42}\)

The key moment in the process of amalgamation of the old and new sections of the elite came in 1812. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the *gabelloti* and *amministratori* had accumulated power working for the princes and

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\(^{40}\) A term which indicates the resident administrators and supervisors in the *latifundia*.

\(^{41}\) See Lupo, “I proprieta' terrieri del Mezzogiorno”.

\(^{42}\) On the relations between the old nobility and the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, see Cancila, *Palermo*, 9-20; the entrepreneurial activities of the ennobled bourgeois Turrisi Colonna, Tasca, and Riso are analyzed in Cancila, *Storia dell'industria in Sicilia*, and Lupo, *Il giardino degli aranci*.
had exploited both the land and the peasantry, while the nobles had accumulated debts living as rentiers. However, the *gabellotti* could not buy the land that they managed from the princes, and the princes could not sell it in order to repay their debts. Feudal law prevented this from happening, effectively protecting the princes’ properties but at the same time denying them the power to buy and sell their land on the market. In other words, the lands owned by the nobility were not marketable. They belonged to families who owned them for generations and could only pass them to either their legitimate inheritors or other families through marriage. The liberal part of the nobility, which was close to the bourgeoisie in economic matters, wanted the abolition of the feudal law so that it could make the best use of its land and, at the same time, wanted the expropriation of unproductive feudal estates from both the conservative part of the nobility and the church.43

In 1812 Britain occupied Sicily and the British general William Bentinck helped form a Sicilian government dominated by representatives from the liberal section of the aristocracy. The Sicilian Parliament approved a liberal Constitution similar to the English one, which served as the foundation of the Kingdom of Sicily and which included the abolition of the feudal law. By abolishing the feudal law, the Constitution guaranteed the possibility of buying and selling land which previously had been tied to the noble families, and *de facto* recognized the importance of landholding over the importance of noble title, opening the ranks of the ruling elite to the wealthy landed bourgeois.44

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Even though the independent Kingdom only lasted until 1815, the abolition of the feudal law was never repealed; when Ferdinand I was restored, he carried on the implementation of the abolition, promoting massive sales of lands that had once belonged to the old nobility and to the church. These sales accelerated the process of formation of the landed bourgeoisie, which came into possession of most of them and soon included some of the richest landed proprietors in Sicily. A further step was taken in 1817, with the creation of the liste degli eleggibili (lists of the eligible local officials, called intenedenti), one of the pillars of the administrative monarchy. These lists were made on the basis of the amount of property owned, and therefore were open to both noblemen and bourgeois. Unlike South Carolina, Sicily did not have universal white male suffrage until the twentieth century; therefore, noblemen and the wealthy bourgeoisie were the only classes which could vote and participate in the local and regional government.  

If the Constitution of 1812 sanctioned in law the alliance between nobility and landed bourgeoisie, the reforms which followed Ferdinand I’s restoration to the throne gave substance to the written word allowing the bourgeoisie to accumulate wealth through the acquisition of former feudal land. At the same time, the creation of the liste degli eleggibili gave the bourgeoisie the possibility of participating side by side with the nobility in the making of local politics. The process of legitimization of the political power of the new class did not go smoothly; in several areas, there were protracted conflicts between groups and families over the control of the local administration and violence was always present, especially in moments of political crisis – such as the two revolutions of 1820 and 1848.  


46 On violence in relation to the rising landed bourgeoisie, see G. Fiume, Le bande armate in Sicilia.
spite of this, it seems clear that throughout the period 1815-1860 the bourgeoisie looked to the nobility as a model to imitate and sought to acquire noble titles in recognition of its social and political power; at the same time, the particular characteristics of the Sicilian aristocracy, which was in many ways an “open elite”, allowed the ennobled bourgeoisie to enter the ranks of the older nobility in increasing numbers. 47 As a result, the two classes continued to exercise their privileges as if they were united in a sort of “proprietary front” against the masses of peasants working on their lands. Whilst their views on local politics could be different, the nobility’s and bourgeoisie’s common aim was the preservation of their privileges over both lands and men. The “elitist nationalist” ideology suited perfectly this aim, provided that nobility and bourgeoisie continued the process of social amalgamation so that the “proprietary front” stood ready for the creation of a conservative nation-state in Sicily. 48

Through the Constitutions of 1808 and 1812, the South Carolinian and Sicilian elites managed to link permanently the idea of nationalism with the idea of a unified ruling class. The political program that stemmed from South Carolina’s and Sicily’s “elitist nationalism” took time to develop and involved an effort in the direction of an “invention of tradition”. 49 As with many of the “invented” nations of the nineteenth century, the elites of South Carolina and Sicily managed to use their

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47 On the Sicilian aristocracy as “open elite”, see P. Di Gregorio, “Nobiltà e nobilitazione in Sicilia nel lungo Ottocento”, Meridiana 19 (1994), 106-107. According to Salvatore Lupo, “the Sicilian nobility was never closed like a caste, but it always accepted among its ranks foreign merchants and local nouveau riches, as long as they were wealthy; the process grew stronger in the nineteenth century, after the relinquishment of feudal privileges in 1812 and the availability of a consistent part of the feudal patrimony... gabelotti, local proprietors, lesser noblemen, and rich bourgeois were accepted into the elite through the flexible channels of marriage policy” or acquisition of a noble title.” see Lupo, Il giardino degli aranci, 74-75.


49 See Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions”.
strong regional identities to enforce a program of “political engineering”, through which the recomposition of their internal divisions coincided with the emergence of a long-awaited nation-state. This process coincided with increasing political pressure from outside, which was instrumental in the transformation of movements for social reform into political programs of “elitist nationalism”. At the same time, the recomposition of the two ruling elites of South Carolina and Sicily occurred as a result of the culmination of the process of mingling between older and newer sections of the elites. In both regions members of the newer sections were accepted into the ranks of the older aristocracies through increasing intermarriage between the wealthiest families; as a consequence, by 1860 cotton planters and landed bourgeois had become part of solid and unified ruling classes, which controlled the local politics and society of South Carolina and Sicily. This process started long before 1860 and it was the main factor that helped transforming the ideological differences into a coherent and acceptable synthesis to both of them.

*Mingling Elites and Nationalism in South Carolina and Sicily*

While in other areas of the two souths the sharp differences between old and new sections of the landed elite were reflected in the ideological distinctions between the patriarchal and paternalistic ethos, in South Carolina and Sicily the situation was different. The cohesiveness and uniformity of the landowning classes of the two regions, caused both by prolonged cultural “insularity” and by the peculiar historical patterns of formation of the two elites, contributed to smoothing over the ideological differences between old and new. The mediation between aristocratic patriarchalism and entrepreneurial paternalism gave birth to an ideological synthesis that had strict regional connotations; several aristocratic patriachs, who belonged to the rice-growing and wheat-growing aristocracies of the two regions, acted as enlightened entrepreneurs and embraced the values of reciprocity and efficiency which lay at the base of the paternalistic ethos.

The Constitutions of 1808 in South Carolina and of 1812 in Sicily laid the foundations of the process of mediation between older and newer sections of the
landed elites of the two regions. While in South Carolina the Constitution of 1808 admitted representatives of the newly-formed upcountry planter class into the lowcountry-dominated legislature, in Sicily the 1812 Constitution abolished feudal rights making the landed nobility and the landed bourgeoisie equal in the eyes of the law. In the following years, the bonds between older and newer sections of the landed elites tightened through intermarriage and mixing. The traditional aristocracies of the two regions opened their ranks to the newcomers, while planters in the making and landed bourgeoisie rose to prominence in politics and society. This process did not occur without conflict, and it required the entire period up to 1860 to reach completion. In both cases the final result was the creation of a peculiarly homogenous and regionally class-conscious landowning elite. 50

The interaction between older and newer sections of the landowning elites had the most profound effect in the realm of ideology, where the differences between old and new were particularly striking. The process of social interaction mediated between the two different world-views and resulted in several instances where members of the older sections of the two aristocracies acted according to the new paternalistic ethos and involved themselves in entrepreneurial activities alongside the newer sections of the elites. This was especially clear in the debates about agricultural reform in South Carolina and Sicily in the 1850s, where particular landowners belonging to the old aristocracies and others belonging to the new elites were found side by side intervening in favor of all the classical components of the paternalistic ethos: crop diversification and improvement of agricultural techniques, rational management of both land and work force, and relations of reciprocity between masters and laborers. 51 Judging from the success of highly specialized

50 The best overview of the peculiar history of South Carolinian elite is Freehling, The Road to Disunion, 213-233; on the peculiar character of the Sicilian elite, see S. Lupo, “Spazio regionale e spazi municipali nel lungo Ottocento: tra storia e storiografia”, in Benigno and Torrisi, Elites e potere in Sicilia, 134-150.

51 In South Carolina, one of the most striking examples of the acceptance of some of the main principles of the paternalistic ethos by an old aristocrat was that of Robert Allston; Allston wrote several articles in De Bow’s Review advocating scientific methods for the cultivation of rice and speaking against the absenteeism of lowcountry aristocrats. See Germany, “The South Carolina Governing Elite”, 98-100. In Sicily, the best example of this kind was Carlo Cottone, Prince of Castelnuovo, a member of the old nobility, and yet the founder of the Istituto Agrario and an
publications devoted to agricultural reform, such as *The Southern Agriculturalist* and *The Carolina Planter* in South Carolina, and *Gli Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana* and *Il Commercio* in Sicily, these issues gathered together landowners from different extractions within the two landed elites to work toward the collective goal of economic improvement. In other words, the elites of the two regions found a common ground on the issue of economic nationalism, partly because their class-consciousness and their regional consciousness overlapped at several levels. 52

It was certainly no accident that some of the most prominent reformist landowners — such as John C. Calhoun in South Carolina and Ruggero Settimo in Sicily — were well-known advocates of the recognition of South Carolinian and Sicilian independence from their respective national governments. The link between the inter-mixing of the two landed elites, movements for agricultural reform, and economic and political nationalism was possible in South Carolina and Sicily only because of the particular nature of class-formation of the two elites, which took form against the background of two highly regionalized, “insular”, cultures, and which overlapped with the process of nation-state formation in both regions. 53

The two landed elites guided the process of nation-state formation and linked it to the recognition of their regional identities, inventing a tradition of “elitist nationalism”, which found its most coherent expression among progressive planters in South Carolina and landowners in Sicily. The struggle for recognition of nationalist aspirations accelerated and focused the process of class-formation in the two landed elites, who, by 1860, constituted homogenous social groups, wholly distinct from the middle and lower classes and characterized by a strong regional identity. In time, “elitist nationalism” became a complex ideology that justified the exclusion of more radical instances of nationalist aspirations by making clear that

advocate of agricultural improvement through crop diversification and direct management; see Lupo, *Il giardino degli aranci*, 63-64.

the only acceptable version of nationalism was the one advanced by the ruling classes of both regions. 54

In South Carolina, several members of the old rice aristocracy embraced the paternalistic ethos, which was typical of the new cotton gentry, and engaged in entrepreneurial activities on their lowcountry plantations. Even though they were part of a traditionally absentee elite, these rice planters strove to be present on their plantations and have very close contact with their sons and the overseers they had placed in charge. When they were not directly supervising their plantations, they demanded almost daily reports on the state of the crops and on the health and behavior of the slaves. These entrepreneurial planters adapted the idea of reciprocity so that it could fit with their traditional way of life. They took personal interest in their slaves, most of whom they knew by name, and they interfered in their lives through the persons that they had placed in charge of their plantations. In frequent and very detailed letters, they guided their sons and overseers step by step on how to raise cash-crops in the most profitable way and how to manage the workforce in the most rational manner. 55

A particularly illuminating example of this sort of entrepreneurial rice planter is Charles Manigault (1795-1874). Manigault descended from one of the oldest families of rice planters in South Carolina and had the habits and the culture of the

54 These arguments follow the interpretations provided by Germany, “The South Carolina Governing Elite” for South Carolina, and by Romeo, Il Risorgimento in Sicilia for Sicily.
55 On entrepreneurial rice planters, see W. Dusinberre, Them Dark Days: Life in the American Rice Swamps (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Dusinberre relates the rice planters’ display of paternalism, strictly intended as a “system of punishments, allowances, and privileges”, to their search for profit (202-204). An early example of entrepreneurial rice planters with paternalistic attitudes is that of the Ball family. In the agreements with his two overseers Benjamin Aims and Daniel Pipkins, Isaac Ball recommended with special emphasis a humane treatment of the slaves on his rice plantations; see the “Agreement between Isaac Ball and Benjamin Aims” (1820), and the “Agreement between Isaac Ball and Daniel Pipkins” (1821), Ball family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia (from now on SCL). See also M. S. Schantz, “A Very Serious Business: Managerial Relationships on the Ball Plantations, 1800-1835”, South Carolina Historical Magazine 88 (1987), 1-22; and E. Ball, Slaves in the Family (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).
patriarchal aristocracy. In 1833, at the age of 38, he purchased Gowrie, a rice plantation on the Georgia side of the Savannah river with a population of fifty slaves, with the declared intent of making it his most profitable enterprise. Consequently, Manigault spent the 1830s and 1840s buying and establishing facilities for the milling and processing of rice and, in 1834, he built a large Big House in the middle of the plantation. Gowrie’s returns paid back more than the initial capital invested by Manigault; by 1835 the rate of profit was already 15 per cent and it remained well over 9 per cent until the 1850s.

In his relations with the workforce at Gowrie, Manigault relied on his overseers since he was absent most of the time. Interestingly, most of the terms of the overseers’ contracts that Manigault wrote were short and straightforward since he knew he would be giving them specific instructions by letter. The hundreds of letters written by Manigault and replies by his overseers at Gowrie between 1833 and 1860 are astonishing. Most of the letters were more than two pages long and extremely specific in reporting on agricultural improvements, slaves’ health, and labor operations and management. The picture that emerges is of a skillful businessman and a demanding landlord who did not hesitate to dismiss an overseer if he did not do his job properly. Manigault replaced six overseers either because they were unable to produce a satisfactory crop, or because they failed to strike the right balance between discipline and familiarity with the slaves. Although he was not physically present on the plantation, Manigault strove to make the master’s authority felt by overseers and slaves alike and, at the same time, tried to control all aspects of life on the plantation.

Manigault’s idea of reciprocity was very much like James Henry Hammond’s: as long as the slaves did their job and acknowledged the master’s authority, he felt


\[58\] Many details on the relation between rice planters and their overseers can be found in W. K. Scarborough, The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South ( Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
obliged to treat them well and take a personal interest in them. In 1848, he wrote to Jesse Cooper, one of his overseers at Gowrie: “My Negroes have the reputation of being orderly and well disposed - but like all Negroes, they are up to anything, if not watched and attended to. I expect the kindest treatment from you - for this has always been a principal thing with me.”

Manigault’s paternalistic ethos made him boast that, unlike other masters, he took “the pride, and the expense, of clothing his Negroes in the substantial way I have always done”.

As Eugene Genovese has noticed, Manigault conceived the distribution of slave clothing as a paternalistic ritual, in which every slave was called by name and given clothes and blankets individually. However, far from treating everybody in the same way, Manigault had a well-ordered system of rewards, which created ranks of privilege and drew divisions among the slaves. The typical rewards to “good Negroes”, usually house servants and cooks, included extra-food and extra-clothing.

Manigault’s interference and control over the slaves’ life extended to all areas of activity, including the slaves’ attempts to cultivate their plots of land, as customary under the “task-system” on rice plantations. Manigault forbade his overseer from keeping poultry “because this is the only thing my people can raise for themselves (they having no spot to plant) except the trifle near their houses and near their dwelling, which enables them to procure little comfort for themselves and which tends to attach them to their homes.” The slaves’ response to Manigault’s narrow concept of reciprocity and to their exploitation was the unusual number of runaways.

University Press, 1966); see also J. D. Clifton, “The Rice Driver: His Role in Slave Management” South Carolina Historical Magazine 82 (1981), 331-353.

Charles Manigault to Jesse T. Cooper, 10 January 1848, Charles I. Manigault’s Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston (from now on SCHS).

Charles Manigault to James Haynes, 1 November 1846, Charles I. Manigault’s Letterbook, SCHS.

See E. D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage, 1974), 555. See also Charles Manigault’s “Souvenirs of Our Ancestors and of My Immediate Family”, Charles Manigault Papers, SCL, where he talks about the necessity of being present on the plantation at least half a year in order to personally attend at clothes distribution among the slaves.

that every overseer employed at Gowrie had to deal with, and the implementation of frequent punishments, such as whipping and confinements. 63

In spite of this, Manigault’s attempt at creating a model plantation at Gowrie, with highly profitable cash-crop production and clearly drawn boundaries between the master and his workforce, was perfectly in line with the paternalistic ethos and shows the influence of progressive planters on the old aristocracy of South Carolina. High returns in cash-crop production and rational management of the workforce were the two most important topics in the debates between agricultural reformers in the specialized journals and were topics which interested both older and newer sections of the South Carolinian elite. The fact that Charles Manigault and other members of the old rice aristocracy were at the vanguard of the movement for agricultural reform is a measure of the degree of homogeneity that the landed elite of South Carolina had reached before the Civil War. 64

Particularly influential among the South Carolinian elite’s agricultural reformers was the South Carolina Agricultural Society, which gathered together all the most important rice and cotton planters in the state. From 1828, the Society published a journal, The Southern Agriculturalist, edited by John D. Legare. Legare set as its goal “to establish the SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE on a surer foundation”, by promoting the implementation of scientific techniques and experimenting with crop rotation and plantation management. 65 The journal was in contact with all the local societies and received periodic reports and articles from planters of every district; in time, Legare thought that the publication would form a sort of “agricultural library” for progressive planters. 66 The themes treated in the Southern Agriculturalist

63 On violence as part of Manigault’s paternalistic ideology, see J. R. Young, “Ideology and Death on a Savannah River Rice Plantation, 1833-1867: Paternalism amidst ‘a Good Supply of Disease and Pain”, Journal of Southern History 59, 1993, 672-706; Young talks specifically about the appalling health conditions of the slaves, which were a continuous concern for Manigault and caused several slaves to run away (690-691). On runaway slaves at Gowrie, see also J. H. Franklin and L. Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 292-293.

64 On Charles’ Manigault’s place among the progressive rice aristocracy, see Dusinberre, Them Dark Days, 3-27; elsewhere, Dusinberre writes that “Charles Manigault was among the leaders ... of the vigorous agricultural capitalism which dominated the antebellum low country.” (203)

65 See J. D. Legare, “Introduction”, Southern Agriculturalist 1 (1828), ii.

emphasized the capitalist spirit related to entrepreneurial management and focused on the best way to profit through agricultural innovation. At the same time, the journal gave advice on how to manage the workforce by implementing paternalistic reciprocity. Several articles in the journal pointed out that planters should make slaves follow specific rules regarding work rhythm, diet, and hygiene; at the same time, planters were advised to give slaves something in return, such as free time on Saturdays or a plot of land to cultivate on their own. According to Theodore Rosengarten, “the journal gave the impression that master and slave always pull the same end of the rope.”  

In 1838, Legaré traveled extensively through the rice growing coast of South Carolina and Georgia. On one hand, he wanted to have a first-hand experience of the problems and of the state of the art of plantation agriculture in the lowcountry. On the other hand, his ultimate aim was to find the ideal planter, whom he thought should be a gentleman who combined extensive knowledge of scientific agriculture with a paternalistic treatment of his slaves and should be significantly successful in the profit of his enterprise. Doubtless, Legaré thought he found his ideal planter when he met James Hamilton Couper. Couper, a rice planter, was the owner and manager of Hopeton Plantation, on the Altamaha River, in Georgia. He had inherited it in 1818 from his father John Couper, and had transformed it into a “model plantation” in which he experimented in rotating crops and implementing different agricultural techniques. At Hopeton, Legaré wrote, “all the valuable crops of the South are cultivated in rotation ... [and] also prepared for the market on the place.” The crops included rice, sea island cotton, corn, peas, and sweet potatoes (see Appendix, Fig. 5); in addition, Couper experimented with sugar, going as far as buying a sugar mill in 1830.  

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69 J. D. Legaré, “Account of an Agricultural Excursion made into the South of Georgia in the Winter of 1832; by the Editor”, Southern Agriculturist 6 (1833), 359.
70 See J. D. Clifton, “Hopeton, Model Plantation of the Antebellum South”, Georgia Historical Quarterly 56 (1982), 331-337. On sugar experimentation see J. Carlyle Sitterson, Sugar Country:
Particularly striking was the way Couper handled plantation management. His five hundred slaves were supervised by highly competent overseers with extensive knowledge in work supervision on rice, cotton, and sugar plantations; Couper also chose the drivers on the basis of their competency in directing the work. It is clear that Couper implemented paternalistic reciprocity to an unparalleled level in his relationship with the slaves. Under the “task system” implemented at Hopeton, slaves had “considerable leisure time in the afternoon to work in their gardens, look after their poultry and livestock, go hunting or fishing.” 71 Couper also allowed slaves to sell their products and have several holidays. Although discipline was still kept with the whip, Couper gave Legare the impression of looking after his slaves in an exceptional way, especially in regard to food, clothing, and shelter. Perhaps, the most striking proof of this was the presence of a hospital, where, according to Kenneth Stampp, “ailing slaves received the best medical attention that the South could provide.” 72

It scarcely comes as a surprise that, in his report of the visit, published in 1833, Legare enthusiastically wrote:

We hesitate not to say that “Hopeton” is decidedly the best regulated plantation we ever visited, and we doubt whether it can be equally (certainly not surpassed) in the Southern States, and perhaps, when we consider the extent of the operations, the variety of crops cultivated, and the number of operatives who have to be directed and managed, so, that their work may be productive, it will not be presumptuous to say that it may fairly challenge comparison with any establishment in the United States. 73

The example of James Hamilton Couper’s “model plantation” at Hopeton, with its efficiency in production, due to the implementation of scientific agricultural techniques, crop rotation and paternalistic reciprocity with the slaves, served as powerful ideal for other planters to imitate. Thanks to Legare’s description in the

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71 Clifton, “Hopeton”, 443.
Southern Agriculturalist, knowledge of Hopeton and its achievements traveled far within the Palmetto state and was held in high regard by both rice and cotton planters; both, in fact, found in Legarè's articles useful advice on how to make their own estates more profitable. More importantly, the Southern Agriculturalist and its examples of profitable enterprises, such as Hopeton, functioned as an important vehicle for debate about agriculture and slave management among the older and newer sections of the South Carolinian elite, who found a common ground in the issues treated in the journal. This was one of the main factors which accelerated the process of social and cultural amalgamation between lowcountry and upcountry aristocracy and made possible their ideological reconciliation.

In Sicily, several enlightened aristocrats embraced the entrepreneurial attitudes of the bourgeoisie and strove to achieve high profits through the cultivation of high-value cash-crops, such as olive oil, citrus and grapes. At the same time, their presence on the estates made them aware of the necessity of relations of reciprocity with their work force, which was tied to their land by particularly usurious contracts and therefore had very little incentive to care about improvements in the cultivation of particular crops. The aristocracy's adoption of bourgeois attitudes influenced different fields of activity beyond the level of agricultural management; enlightened aristocrats who implemented scientific agriculture and paternalistic reciprocity on their landed estates were usually also at the forefront of movements for moderate economic and social progress and for improvement of the conditions of the lower classes through paternalistic reforms. Typically, they were advocates of liberal economic policies, which featured prominently in the pamphlets and articles written by bourgeois progressive intellectuals, and of political liberalism, which had been the driving force behind the making of the Constitution of 1812, the document that sanctioned in law the alliance between nobility and bourgeoisie.74

73 Legarè, “Account of an Agricultural Excursion”, Southern Agriculturalist 6 (1833), 359.
74 For an overview of the economic debate and its political implications among the Sicilian elite, see M. Grillo, “L’economia politica nella Sicilia borbonica” in Iachello, ed., I Borbone in Sicilia. The most prestigious bourgeois entrepreneur, and one who had a profound influence over the ideology of several progressive aristocrats, was Vincenzo Florio (1799-1867). Florio emerged in the 1830s and
The most striking example of a member of the old nobility embracing bourgeois ideology and implementing ideas about economic reform and paternalistic reciprocity is that of Pietro Lanza. Lanza (1807-1855) descended from the Princes of Trabia, the most illustrious family of patriarchal aristocrats of Sicily; in 1832 he married Eleonora Spinelli and became Prince of Scordia, in Calabria. The Trabia were renowned for their interest in commercial agriculture and in economic development. They were the leading citrus producers in the Conca d'Oro, around Palermo, where they had numerous giardini (groves); they were also involved in manufacturing and collaborated in several entrepreneurial activities with ennobled bourgeois such as Barons Turrisi Colonna, Chiaromonte Bordonaro, and Riso.  

Continuing the family tradition, Pietro Lanza became a leading liberal economist and intellectual and wrote several treaties. In one, Dello spirito di associazione in Inghilterra (1842), he praised the entrepreneurial spirit of liberal England and exhorted the Sicilian elite to follow the English example. He also actively participated in the debate on protectionism and wrote articles for some of the most prestigious economic reviews of the time, such as Giovanni Malvica's Effemeridi. At heart, Pietro Lanza was an aristocratic patriarch turned paternalist; he was willing to implement reforms for the benefit of the people, whom he felt obliged to care for, as long as they did not challenge the social order. In one of his most important works, Sulla istruzione del popolo, published in the Effemeridi in 1835,
Lanza claimed that “primary, elementary, or popular instruction ... should not have any other aim than refining the lowest class of society, [and] taming its habits ... all the administrative and ecclesiastical authorities should watch over it”. Lanza also wrote that the state had the obligation of fulfilling “the main need” of the poor, “which is the one of becoming a man for the society.” Therefore, for Lanza, educational reforms were intended as a vehicle to mold the character and the habits of the lower classes, so that they would no longer be a threat for the society in which they lived. At the same time, he thought that, in return for peaceful social relations, the wealthy had the reciprocal obligation to provide for the education of the poor.  

Following the example set by prestigious liberal aristocrats such as Pietro Lanza, several members of the nobility gathered in the progressive circle of the Istituto Agrario which was founded in 1819 by Carlo Cottone, Prince of Castelnuovo, and commenced its official activities in 1847. The institute was committed to the spread of agricultural knowledge among the lower classes in a learning environment which emphasized paternalistic reciprocity. The Istituto Agrario issued from 1853 the Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana, which was directed by Mario Inzenga, and hosted a series of debates on the necessity of agricultural reform to increase the productivity of the landed estates. Two key-points were consistently stressed in several articles written by both noble and non-noble landowners: the improvement of agricultural techniques in order to obtain high returns, and the direct management of the landed estates. The articles in the Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana showed several examples of what direct conduct and rational management meant for agricultural reformers. These articles profoundly influenced both old and new sections of the Sicilian

78 Carlo Cottone, Prince of Castelnuovo (1756-1829) was the main advocate of the Constitution of 1812 which sanctioned the alliance of the liberal nobility with the landed bourgeoisie, and the owner of a large agricultural enterprise in the Conca d'Oro. After his death, Ruggero Settimo, Prince of Fitalia, made a fundamental contribution in establishing the Istituto Agrario in Cottone's former villa. See Lupo, Il giardino degli agranti, 63-64; according to Lupo, in the institute, “during a course which lasted six years, thirty children from peasant families of the surroundings learned both
landowning elite providing models of progressive agriculture – such as the Bonvicino and the Regaliali estates – which were widely admired by both noble and non-noble landowners. 79

One of the most interesting figures among enlightened Sicilian noblemen was Lucio Tasca, Baron of Regaliali (1800-1854). Tasca’s family represented the intermingling of old and new, since he himself had become Baron late in life, while his son Lucio (1820-1892) had become Count of Almerita through his marriage with one of the daughters of the Prince of Scordia Pietro Lanza in 1846. Tasca had acquired a former feudal estate at Regaliali, in the inner part of Sicily, where he had established a large farm for the cultivation of wheat and olives and the production of wine. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, he transformed part of what used to be a latifondo run through absentee landownership by a patriarchal nobleman into his own model estate for experiments in reformist agriculture. On a part of the estate, Tasca implemented direct management and imported agricultural machines, such as new prototypes of ploughs and particular kinds of hoes imported from England, which the laborers used for the cultivation of his land. Through these kinds of innovations, Tasca was able to realize consistently high profit for the production and sale of cash-crops, and he became a highly regarded figure among Sicilian noble entrepreneurs. 80

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79 On Bonvicino and Regaliali, see below. On the ideas of rational management and direct conduction as a meeting point between older and newer section of the Sicilian landed elite, see Lupo, Il giardino degli aranci, 62-69, which focuses on the entrepreneurial outlook of both noble and non-noble citrus-growers in nineteenth-century Sicily. According to Lupo, Sicilian agronomic culture is strictly related to the bourgeoisie’s acquisition of former noble land, “and mirrors ... some of its fundamental tenets, among which the idea of direct management of the estates as guarantee of technical progress.” (65) In the Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana 3 (1855), Inzenga, the editor of the journal, translated a piece from L. De Lavergne on “Delle agricole intraprese” (Agricultural Entrepreneurships), saying in the preface that it fit the Sicilian case very well; the main concept in the piece was the idea of the agricultural entrepreneur as a capitalist ready to invest his capital in whatever was necessary for the improvement of his agricultural enterprise. Certainly, this description fits perfectly the new landed aristocracy, who made profits growing specific cash-crops, but it could also apply to several members of the old nobility, who had invested part of their capital in the production of citrus or other products of commercial agriculture.

80 See Cancila, Storia dell’industria in Sicilia, 118-119.
In a series of articles written in 1854 in the *Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana*, Baron Niccolò Turrisi Colonna, another enlightened aristocrat, reported on the visit he made to Lucio Tasca’s estate shortly after his death. 81 Turrisi praised Tasca’s courage and innovative spirit, saying that he managed to achieve “a better economic organization” and “a better administrative organization, which kept a sense of order .... among a thousand workers”. 82 He managed to both rationalize and improve cash-crop production by implementing a mixed system of direct land management and sharecropping. In respect to the laborers, Tasca abolished the previous tenancy agreements (*colonie a terratico*), which were long-term leases that obliged the tenants to pay a fixed rent for the land they cultivated. Fully embracing the paternalist ethos, Tasca implemented only sharecropping agreements (*colonie parziali*) with his tenants. The *colonie parziali* were short-term contracts according to which master and laborer agreed on the laborer’s tenancy on particular tracts of land; the master provided the laborer with the agricultural implements, whilst the laborer contributed a share of the capital investment which was calculated on the basis of the product coming from the plot rented. 83 The *colonie parziali* were arguably the most advanced form of agricultural contract in Sicily and the closest equivalent to the sharecropping contracts practiced in the more advanced regions of northern and central Italy. In the words of Jane and Peter Schneider, “while sharecroppers did not have the leverage of yeomen farmers, who owned their own land, they were not so constrained as slaves or serfs. They contributed a share of the capital investment in the holding, participated in the risks and profits, and to some extent worked on their own initiative.” 84

81 Niccolò Turrisi Colonna (1817-1892) was Baron of Bonvicino. He was the most important figure of ennobled bourgeois in Sicily and was involved in numerous entrepreneurial activities related to both agriculture and industry. He owned the “model farm” of Bonvicino, where he practiced crop rotation and scientific agriculture, and the paper factory of Castelbuono See G. Inzenga, “Una visita alla masseria di Bonvicino, proprietà dei fratelli Turrisi”, *Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana* 2 (1854), 213-223, and Cancila, *Storia dell’industria in Sicilia*, 79-81.
Lucio Tasca's paternalism was particularly evident in his construction policy at Regaliali. In his article, Turrisi wrote that Tasca believed that progress was impossible on the latifondi if the laborers did not have places to live and facilities to store the products. Consequently, he put a considerable amount of capital into the construction of dwellings and barracks. Turrisi, then, described in detail the main construction of the Regaleali estate, which Tasca built as a permanent symbol of the paternalistic relation between master and laborers. The construction plan was rectangular-shaped and had at its center “the master’s house, which [presented] a comfortable residence for the landowner wanting to supervise his estate’s activities” (see Appendix, Fig. 6). Turrisi wrote that it was clear “how the entire rectangle that forms the farm is well-equipped with places suitable for the dwellings of workers and employees, for the conservation of products, and for the stables of the animals used for transportation.” Tasca’s acceptance of paternalist reciprocity obliged him to provide his laborers with places where they could live in return for the work that they did on his estate, but he made clear in his construction plans that the master’s residence was distinct from and above workers’ houses and animals’ stables.

The ground plan of the main building on Lucio Tasca’s estate reflected both the paternalistic ethos and the entrepreneurial outlook of the enlightened aristocracy of Sicily. The presence of the master on his properties, both as supervisor of his work force and as manager of his land, was particularly clear in the layout of the Regaliali estate, where the main compound was structured around the landowner’s house. The same was true for several main buildings of other landed estates belonging to enlightened aristocrats. Lucio Tasca was just one of a number of noblemen who were at the vanguard of the movement for agricultural reform in Sicily. His achievements in terms of the realization of a model estate and in the recognition of a leading role among agricultural reformers is a measure of the degree of mixing between the older and newer section of the Sicilian landed elite and of its ideological homogeneity in the period before Unification.

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The link between landownership, agricultural reform, and nationalism in South Carolina was particularly evident in the figure of John C. Calhoun. Calhoun belonged to a family of planters that had built their fortune in the South Carolina upcountry during the early nineteenth-century cotton boom. He had inherited from his father, Patrick, the plantation at Fort Hill and its seventy-five slaves. He also inherited the paternalistic attitude of considering his slaves part of the extended family and of taking personal interest in their lives. Although he was no different from other planters in the way he resorted to violence in order to maintain discipline, Calhoun came closer than most in having relations of reciprocity with his workforce, going to great lengths to realize what he thought was the duty of every paternalist master: to feed, clothe, and protect his slaves. 87

Calhoun combined paternalistic behavior toward his workforce with a genuine interest in agricultural reform. He was one of the best known progressive planters in antebellum South Carolina and a member of the South Carolina Agricultural Society. He was extremely interested in scientific agriculture and followed the debates on the implementation of crop rotation and on slave management by overseers in both the American Farmer and the Carolina Planter, two of the leading reform journals. Like all progressive planters of his time, Calhoun strove to achieve the perfect balance between high profit in the production of cotton and other cash-crops, and paternalistic management of his workforce. Consequently, on his plantation at Fort Hill, he focused his efforts both on scientific experiments and on ways to achieve the most effective relationship with his laborers through the employment of suitable overseers. Calhoun's efforts were repaid when the Agricultural Society of Pendleton's Committee on Farms on visit at Fort Hill declared that “although it may be truly said that nature has done much for it, yet to

87 See I. H. Bartlett, John C. Calhoun: A Biography (New York: Norton, 1993), 279-281. Bartlett notices that Patrick Calhoun's use of referring to "his family black and white" was a way of expressing the paternalistic ideal; young John C. Calhoun "certainly subscribed to the paternalistic ideal" and understood "early in life that owning slaves conveyed both privileges and responsibilities". (279) Consequently, whilst on one hand he did not hesitate to enforce discipline when necessary, on the other hand, he went as far as allowing every slave family "an acre or two to cultivate for its own use" (280).
its proprietor clearly belongs the merit of very superior management". Significantly, the Committee praised both Calhoun’s implementation of innovative agricultural techniques and the superior treatment of his slaves, who slept in comfortable stone houses. 88

Calhoun’s most impressive achievements were in politics. Although he had been both Secretary of War and Vice President in several administrations, Calhoun was in himself the incarnation of South Carolinian nationalism. He was the mind behind the opposition of South Carolina’s legislature to the federal government’s protective tariffs and the theorist of the doctrine of Nullification as a political act of a minority state against the tyranny of the majority. Throughout his political career, Calhoun worked to unify South Carolina planters around the two issues of state rights and aristocratic republicanism. 89

He considered these issues central to the ideology of “elitist nationalism” that linked the argument for the nationalist aspirations of South Carolina with the necessity of restricting the rule of local politics to a few members of the elite. It is no accident that the central figure of South Carolinian “elitist nationalism” was a member of the new cotton gentry who had married the daughter of a rice aristocrat, a prominent agricultural reformer, and a firm advocate of paternalistic relations between masters and slaves and between elite and masses. 90

88 See O. R. Browles et al., “Agricultural Society of Pendleton Report of the Committee on Farms Made to the Society on the 10th October, 1844”, Carolina Planter 10 (1845), 210; the Committee concluded that “the farm houses were sufficiently numerous, and both comfortable and convenient. And this was more especially the case with the negro house, which consisted of a building of stone of superior masonry, two hundred and ten feet in length, divided into apartments, with separate fire-places, sufficiently large for all the purposes of comfort and healthful ventilation.” (221). See also M. L. Coit, John C. Calhoun: American Portrait (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).


90 On Calhoun’s elitism and paternalism over both black and white masses in South Carolina, see W. W. Freehling, “Beyond Racial Limits: Paternalism over Whites in the Thought of Calhoun and Fitzhugh” in The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War (New York: Oxford
It is useful to compare Calhoun with the Sicilian Ruggero Settimo; both of them are examples of progressive aristocrats who were also convinced nationalists in their respective regions. In the figure of Settimo, as in the figure of Calhoun, landownership, agricultural reform, and nationalism were linked together. Ruggero Settimo (1778-1863) was the Prince of Fitalia, one of the most illustrious noble families of Sicily. Although he belonged to the old aristocracy, he embraced the paternalistic ethos of the newer section of the Sicilian landed elite. He was in contact with all the major figures of the liberal nobility and especially with Carlo Cottone, Prince of Castelnuovo, and main advocate of the Constitution of 1812. ⁹¹

It was due to the efforts of Ruggero Settimo that Cottone’s idea of founding the *Istituto Agrario* was realized in 1847. As stated above, the *Istituto Agrario* issued the *Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana*, the major publication in which old and new aristocracies addressed issues related to agricultural reform and scientific experimentation in cash-crop growing on the *latifondi*. It was in this same publication that enlightened aristocrats and bourgeois landowners discussed the most effective way to implement relations of reciprocity with their workforce. Ruggero Settimo belonged to a group of liberal and paternalistic aristocrats, that included, among others, the Prince of Scordia, Pietro Lanza, and Barons Lucio Tasca and Niccolò Turrisi Colonna. ⁹²

Settimo enjoyed an illustrious political career. During the Sicilian revolutionary government, which gave birth to the Constitution of 1812, he was Minister of War. Then, after the Bourbon Restoration of 1816, he refused to participate in the local government, protesting against the Neapolitan King’s attempts at centralization. During the Revolution of 1820, and then again, during the Revolution of 1848, when Sicily separated from the Bourbon state, Settimo was elected head of the

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⁹² See Lupo, *Il giardino degli aranci*, 63-64. Significantly, Turrisi Colonna was one of the most outspoken Sicilian elitist nationalists; he was a friend of Vincenzo Fardella di Torrearsa, one of the liberal aristocrats protagonists of the 1848 Revolution, and he took part in the revolutionary government which claimed the foundation of a Sicilian nation based on the Constitution of 1812.
government. His prestige and his fame were such that he was identified with the movement for Sicilian independence from the Bourbon Kingdom. 93

However, Settimo was really the leader of the moderate wing of Sicilian nationalism, the one that included both liberal aristocracy and landed bourgeoisie. He held the reins of the two revolutionary governments of 1820 and 1848 in such a way that he prevented more radical nationalists from succeeding in their programs of land reform. He put in practice the theory of Sicilian “elitist nationalism” by holding on to the belief that the future Sicilian nation should be ruled by a minority of chosen members within the elite. Ruggero Settimo’s life is certainly the best example of the link between “elitist nationalism”, large landownership, agricultural reform, and paternalistic practice in nineteenth-century Sicily.94

The South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites managed to reach a degree of uniformity and homogeneity which was unparalleled in other regions of the two souths before 1860. This uniformity was a consequence of the process of amalgamation of older and newer sections of the elites which occurred throughout the period 1815-1860, and which reflected in the smoothing over of ideological differences. Both in South Carolina and Sicily, members of the older aristocracies embraced the entrepreneurial attitude and the implementation of paternalistic reciprocity, which were typical of the newer classes. Moreover, South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites found a common ground in the participation in debates relating to scientific agriculture and work management which characterized the

93 Fardella di Torrearsa reports that “his [Settimo’s] name was almost like the symbol of that great revolution”, and that “all the liberals respected him and consider him as if he was the appointed head of their party”; see Fardella di Torrearsa, Ricordi sulla Rivoluzione, 67. Both Pietro Lanza, Prince of Scordia and Niccolò Turrisi Colonna, Baron of Bonvicino, took part as ministers in the governments that followed one another during the 1848 Revolution; afterwards, Pietro Lanza was sent on exile in Paris, where he died in 1855.

94 Significantly, the most published Sicilian elitist nationalist in exile, Michele Palmieri di Miccichè criticized Settimo harshly for his moderate attitude during the 1848 Revolution; according to Miccichè, Settimo was guilty of not having established a dictatorship of the propertied classes and not using the strong arm against the lower strata and their radical supporters. See M. Palmieri di Miccichè, Quattro mesi di Rivoluzione ! (Palermo: Tipografia Clamis e Roberti, 1848), 37-38; see also N. Cinnella, Michele palmieri di Miccichè (Palermo: Sellerio, 1976), 274-276.
journals issued by particularly prestigious regional institutions, such as the South Carolina Agricultural Society and the Sicilian Istituto Agrario. This convergence of interests over agricultural issues contributed in a major way to the amalgamation of the ideologies of the two ruling classes and at the same time prepared the background for the creation of elitist nationalist movements, which claimed the economic, social, and cultural distinctiveness of the South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites from the rest of the elites of their respective nations.

*The City as Social Display: The Symbolism of Power in Charleston and Palermo*

The distinctive regional identities of the landed elites of South Carolina and Sicily were felt very strongly in the two cities of Charleston and Palermo. For more than two centuries, the elites of the two regions worked at shaping and modifying the physical appearance of the two cities, making them in many respects a display of their power. The location of the elites' houses in the cities' plans, the concentration in particular residential areas, and the choice of particular architectural styles were all elements that contributed to Charleston's and Palermo's distinctive appearances.

The two regional elites had specific and distinctive relations with the two cities. On one hand, they used them as markets for the sale of cash-crops, while, on the other hand, they resided within them when they acted as absentee landowners far removed from their landed estates. This double feature gave Charleston and Palermo uniquely close relations with plantations and *latifondi*, with all the economic and social implications that derived from them. Confined in regional ports at the periphery of the world-economy, Charleston's and Palermo's landed elites depended throughout their modern history upon fluctuations in the world agricultural market. During periods when they profited from economic prosperity, they built the two cities as a clear reminder of their power and influence to both residents and outside visitors.
Town planning and architecture are solid bases for research on comparative urban history since the processes of social and political change imply the creation of new physical and mental images of the city. At the same time, the construction of the physical entity of the city is rooted in the economic processes that are at the heart of urban growth. Buildings and streets are the physical spaces of convergence/interaction of the different constituent elements of the complex system 'city' and the sources of its image.95

In comparing modern cities, it is useful to start from the Marxist assumption that urbanism is a "particular geographic form and a spatial patterning of relationships" which relates to the process of capital accumulation and consumption. In the case of cities at the periphery of the world capitalist system, their function, organization, and social structure are related to the particular forms accumulation of capital took in the raw material export-producer regions after their incorporation within the system. In these regions the economy was controlled by substantial landholding elites, who used the cities both as markets for staple crops produced in large agricultural units and as residential areas where they could gather and compete in the display of their wealth. It should be possible to study, then, the "particular forms of built environment which have accompanied the expansion of capitalism" in peripheral areas and the ideologies which have supported it and which are "embodied in the theory and practice of urban planning.” Therefore, what makes historical comparison between peripheral cities -- such as Charleston and Palermo -- possible is the fact that historical world capitalism has expressed itself through a comparable set of ideas based on related systems of labor linked to the production of capital. At the periphery, “it was represented in cities by a distinctive spatial organization with local elite communities concentrating in suburban residential

95 The standard work on urban images is K. Lynch, The Image of the City (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1960); Lynch relates the image to the way the city is “perceived by ... people of widely diverse class and character” and also to the way the city develops through time as a “product of many builders who are constantly modifying the structure for reasons of their own” (2).
areas and reproducing ... the urban structure, housing style, and architectural layout of the core countries.”  

The layout can symbolize the ideology of power behind it in a very apparent way by bearing permanent structural modifications on the overall shape of the cityscape after the intervention of a public authority. It is what D. J. Olsen describes referring to Mumford’s The Baroque City: “certain parts of certain cities in certain periods have displayed qualities of balanced magnificence, controlled movement, dramatic expression, and axial symmetry, frequently with the intention of glorifying an individual, a dynasty, a social class” 97. But the layout of a city also can symbolize the ideology of power in a less apparent way, by showing the differences in social status between different parts of the cityscape. In this case, the individual members of a wealthy elite make transitory modifications on the overall layout, choosing a particular residential area of a city and making it the center of high society in a particular historical period.98

In both cases, the adaptation of architectural features to the symbolism of power expressed in the layout played a major role in constructing the city’s image. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conventions about architecture dictated that it had to be “representational”: the external appearance of the buildings should correspond to the social status of the occupant. But, as Olsen states, “representational architecture did not merely depict a hierarchical social structure, but provided a stage on which the kind of life appropriate to those at the top of the hierarchy could most conspicuously be pursued.”99

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century agrarian elites, like the ones that dominated Charleston and Palermo, built their palaces and their villas in the city and its

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99 Olsen, The City as a Work of Art, 287.
surroundings as stages for their social activities and as models of representation. These were perfect examples of Veblen's "conspicuous consumption", but they were also in many ways rational investments. Through a complex display of symbols, their architectural features conveyed to observers the idea that the wealth and economic power of their owners was based on large landed estates. Insofar as they could create a clear relation between the city and the countryside in the minds of citizens and travellers, the luxurious houses of Charleston and Palermo indicated a rational way of converting economic capital into political, social, cultural and symbolic capital. 100

A comparison, then, can be drawn between the ways the landed elites of Charleston and Palermo modified the layouts of their cities -- which already bore permanent structural modifications -- by choosing particular areas of residence in which to express their social and economic exclusivity in a conspicuous way through "representational" architecture. In doing this, the two landed elites constructed an image of the city which built upon already established ones acquired in the previous centuries. While the old image symbolized the political domination of a distant state over its colony, the new image symbolized the individual power of the landed aristocrats, their domination of the economic and social life of the city, and their political commitment in spite of and against a new and hostile state. The old image was an image of autocratic absolutism in its most perfect form; the new image was an image of elitist nationalism in its embryonic form.

The old and the new image of Charleston and Palermo can be discerned clearly in the travelers' accounts which various foreign visitors -- especially English ones -- wrote during their journeys in South Carolina and Sicily between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century. However, what makes the two sets of primary sources comparable is the fact that in both cases the two images of the city blend together in the definition of its overall "imageability" -- a concept Kevin Lynch defines as the qualities, meaning its "shape, colour, or arrangement", which "facilitate the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly

100 See P. Bourdieu, Distinction (Paris: PUF, 1979); see also T. Veblen, "The Theory of the Leisure
useful mental images” of a city. A city “highly imageable ... would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation”. 101

Travelers’ accounts depict early nineteenth-century Charleston and Palermo as highly imageable cities and suggest that the reason for this was that the early and later images of the two cities built on one another perfectly in the eye of the outside observers. The accounts also tell us indirectly that the two landed elites succeeded in building harmonious relations between old and new urban and architectural traditions. However, travelers’ accounts do not tell us how the transformations undergone by Charleston and Palermo related to the changes in social and political attitudes. Therefore, comparison of the influence of the landed elites on the shape and image of the two cities should also take into account how social and political attitudes were physically and symbolically expressed in town planning and architecture; to this end, one should complement the evidence from travelers’ accounts with sustained study of the local architectural traditions.

When Charleston was founded in 1670, it was clear from the start that unlike other American settlements it was going to be a city, rather than a fort or trading post. The eight “lord proprietors” to whom Charles II granted the charter, had in mind a precise town planning that fit in the general plan of creating agricultural villages also functioning as centers of commercial life. “They wanted a city .... planned in advance, laid out according to a checkboard plan.” 102 Accordingly, Governor Sir John Yeamans, under the instructions of Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, laid out a grid of eight blocks, surrounded by fortifications on the peninsula formed by the Ashley and Cooper rivers.

Eighteenth-century maps of Charleston show us its regular plan, or “Grand Modell”, centered around “a gridiron design with an open square at the center

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where the two principal streets” intersected, Church Street, running North-South and Broad Street, running East-West. This very carefully laid out plan became the first recognizable feature of Charleston’s cityscape (see Appendix, Fig. 7). The square and the two streets became the physical and symbolic center of the city, where the architecture of churches, council houses and courts manifestly reminded the people of England across the ocean. In the 1750s, the geographical center of the city moved to its present location at the crossroad of Meeting Street and Broad Street; again, the presence of distinctive symbols of authority, the State House, the Watch House, St. Michael’s Church, and the slave market, characterized the central square.

Various travelers’ accounts stress the regularity of Charleston’s layout. A typical comment was: “the streets of Charleston are straight and generally regular” In the nineteenth century visitors were still struck by the regularity of the original layout which had survived its inventors and was regarded as the first prominent feature of Charleston. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ebenezer Kellogg wrote “the town is laid out very regularly and the streets are directed very nearly the four cardinal points ... parallel to Eastbay going to the west you find Church, Meeting and King Streets; the two last of which with Broad Street that crosses them at right angles a little below the middle of the town, are the principal streets.” Half a century later, in the 1850’s, various travellers wrote that Charleston was laid out according to a rectilinear plan that was less monotonous than other cities in America and with streets that were wide and airy.

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103 J. W. Reps, The Making of Urban America: a History of City Planning in the United States (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 175-177. Two maps dated 1704 and 1740 show that the meeting point of Church and Broad Streets continued to be the topographic center of Charleston until mid-eighteenth century.
105 see Olwell, Masters, Slaves, and Subjects, 36-40.
106 “Diary of Timothy Ford, 1785-1786”, South Carolina Historical Magazine 13 (1912), 141.
108 See for example H. A. Murray, Lands of the Slave and the Free; or, Cuba, the United States, and Canada (London: Routledge, 1857), 375-377; C. F. M. Bromley, a Woman’s Wandering in the Western World (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1861), 15-16; J. Robertson, A Few Months in
Charleston’s first image, then, clearly impressed upon the mind of nineteenth-century travelers the ideas of a regularity of plan and of intersecting avenues running straight in the direction of the four cardinal points. Both these ideas had their roots in the first layout of the Lord Proprietors. Its simplicity and rationality were the essence of the old image of Charleston, the image of what had been a colonial city, conceived from the start by English nobles as part of a rational plan of territorial settlement and as a physical proof of the power of the colonizing state.

When Charleston was founded, Palermo was already two thousand years old. Its inhabited area, which was much larger than Charleston’s, was surrounded completely by walls and was characterized by constructions of various historical periods. Palermo had been for a long time the residence of the Sicilian kings, but since the sixteenth century it had fallen to the status of a colonial capital ruled by Spanish viceroys. The main street of the city was called Cassaro, running roughly East-West from the Royal palace to the sea. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, one of the Spanish viceroys, Maqueda, opened a new street — Strada Nuova — which was perpendicular to the Cassaro, and built a square, called the Quattro Canti or Quattro Cantoni, in the intersection of the two streets. The Quattro Canti, which was at the geographical center of Palermo, became the main square of the city and it was surrounded by churches and palaces whose facades bore the images of Spanish kings and viceroys. More so than in the case of Charleston’s Lord Proprietors, the image of the colonizing power that had promoted the rationalization of the cityscape was physically present in Palermo in the shape of statues. 109

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Eighteenth-century maps of Palermo show the city enclosed by walls neatly separated in four distinct quarters by the intersection of the two streets. The operation carried out by viceroy Maqueda gave origin to the most recognizable feature in the layout of Palermo and one that conditioned the future development of the city in such a way that makes it possible to compare it to the foundation of a new settlement (see Appendix, Fig. 8). Like Charleston, Palermo acquired its new layout because of a decision taken by the ruling class of the colonizing power over the settlement of one of its colonies. Like Charleston’s grid, Palermo’s cross was a living monument to the ideology of rulers who could conceive and impose a well ordered, bureaucratic, and uniform vision of the empire over their colonies. 110

The comments of various travelers who visited Palermo from the end of the eighteenth century up to the 1860s are reminiscent of similar observations made by travelers to Charleston. For example, at the end of the eighteenth century Brydone and Swinburne wrote “two spacious streets intersect each other in the center of the city, where they form a handsome square called the Ottangola [an old name for Quattro Canti], adorned with elegant buildings”. 111 The fact that most travelers mentioned the Quattro Canti is a clear indication of the admiration they shared for the regularity of the city’s layout. Palermo’s old image, based on the symbolism related to an autocratic colonial power, was clearly part of what imparted a distinctive character to the city throughout the nineteenth century. In fact, both Russell and Boid, writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, repeated almost verbatim Brydone’s and Swinburne’s comments on the regularity of the layout and the spaciousness and elegance of the Quattro Cantoni, the Cassaro and the Strada Nuova. 112

110 See De Seta and Di Mauro, Palermo, 93-135; in a number of eighteenth-century maps a constant topographical feature is the cross formed at the Quattro Canti by the Cassaro and the Strada Nuova. See also M. Fagiolo and M. L. Madonna, Il teatro del sole, la rifondazione di Palermo nel Cinquecento e l’idea della città barocca (Rome: Officina, 1981); and S. Boscarino, Sicilia Barocca (Rome: Officina, 1981).

111 P. Brydone, H. Swinburne, et al., The Present State of Sicily and Malta, extracted from Mr. Brydone, Mr. Swinburne and other modern Travellers (London: C. Kearsley, 1788), 133.

112 See G. Russell, A Tour through Sicily and Malta in the year 1815 (London: Sherwood, 1819), 42; and E. Boid, Travels through Sicily and the Lipari Islands in the month of December 1824 (London: T. Flint, 1827), 10. Still in 1898, American writer William A. Paton considered the Quattro Canti as
In many ways, it is possible to relate the idea of rationality which was behind Palermo's new layout with the one that lay behind Charleston's grid. In fact, the old image of both cities was based on a simple -- but effective -- town plan, centered around the intersection of two main streets, running roughly in the direction of the four cardinal points, in a central space which was to become the topographic and symbolic center of the city. In both cases, then, simplicity and order coincided with the standardization and rationalization brought by the imperial power over its colony; in both cases the implicit assumption was that the city had to develop along the rational lines set by the colonizer. On one hand, we can say that this happened, since the rationality of the layout is what travellers continued to notice both in Charleston and in Palermo in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, as time passed and other authorities replaced the colonizing power, the layout of Charleston and Palermo became more complex than the seventeenth century planners wanted it to be.

Charleston had its heyday in the eighteenth century. Soon after its foundation, it became the colony’s leading port. Its wealth was based on the slave trade and the export of rice. Rice cultivation techniques, imported from Africa together with slaves, allowed the growth of large plantations in the swamps that surrounded the city, where the crop was produced mainly for the European market. The increasing demand for rice in the world market supported a city population that grew exponentially, reaching 20,000 by the end of the eighteenth century. The demand for rice also made fortunes for a few hundreds of planters -- many of whom descended either from the English gentry or from the Barbadian landed elite -- who, by the mid-eighteenth century were regarded as Charleston’s distinctive aristocracy.

113 the “heart of Palermo” and “the most interesting point of the city”; see W. A. Paton, Picturesque Sicily (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900), 28-30.  
It was in the eighteenth century that Charleston acquired its definitive character of “queen of the plantations”. Its close relation with the countryside, in fact, singled it out among American cities. Since the rice swamps in the surrounding area were unhealthy during the summer, the South Carolina lowcountry elite developed the habit of abandoning the plantations and going to live in Charleston for part of the year. All the richest families had houses in the city, which, with the passing of time, became the center of various social and cultural activities that set the standard for the aristocratic way of life of much of the American South. 114

After 1760 Charleston’s rice trade lost its central place in the economy of South Carolina; the development of the cotton gin in the 1790’s encouraged the spread of cotton plantations throughout the upcountry and the shift of the capital to inland Columbia sanctioned the diminished importance of the port city. Although its population rose to 40,000 in the first half of the nineteenth century, Charleston was a city in relative decline. Nonetheless, it was still capable of supporting a wealthy landed elite. On the eve of the Civil War, it was dominated by planters who used its port for the export of both rice and cotton, entertained various kinds of business, and came with their families to enjoy its famous winter season.115

The wealth of Charleston’s landed elite was reflected in numerous changes in the cityscape. The overall layout of the city was subject to subsequent modifications that altered the original setting in quite dramatic ways. The city expanded at such speed that the city walls were dismantled twice in the course of forty years. The directions of expansion were indicated in the maps subsequent to 1740: North and East. A new series of grids covered the landscape around the area of the original


settlement and the focus of city life shifted to where the mansions of the wealthiest planters were, all along King and Meeting Street, which stretched North-South from the sea to the countryside, and on the banks of the Ashley and Cooper rivers, in the new areas of expansion. Moreover, as the city also expanded towards the sea, the walk along the seaside -- called the Battery -- quickly became the most fashionable place of evening gathering among the planters who built beautiful houses facing the sea, as is clear from prints of the 1840’s and 1850’s.

Travelers’ accounts written in the first half of the nineteenth century report in detail the beauty of the planters’ houses in the surroundings of Charleston and the fashionable life that characterized Meeting and King streets. However, travelers seemed most struck by the Battery; by the mid-nineteenth century this public walk had become the city’s leading attraction and the main stage for the public display of planters’ wealth and paternalism. According to J. & M. Turnbull, “surrounding the Battery” there were “some of the finest houses in Charleston”; however, the Battery was “a favorite resort of all classes ... here may be seen southern belles and beaux, rich planters, negroes and children, all enjoying themselves.”

Rosalie Roos, who was a house servant in Charleston, wrote in her diary about seeing the “fashionable world” gathering on the Battery in the evening and “ladies in silk dresses” going in carriages from there to King Street.

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116 See Olwell, Masters, Slaves, and Subjects, 36-40; and Rogers, Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys.
117 On Charleston’s architectural and urban characteristics in the nineteenth century, see Severens, Charleston; F. P. Bowes, The Culture of Early Charleston (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1942), 115-130. Reps, The Making of Urban America, 177, has the best reproduction of a famous view of Charleston, looking to the Battery and up into Meeting Street in 1851.
118 See for example “Ebenezer Kellog’s visit to Charleston”, 4. See also Turnbull, American Photographs, 96; and R. Roos, Travels in America: 1851-55 (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 25.
119 Turnbull, American Photographs, 92-93.
120 Roos, Travels in America, 127-129; see also W. Ferguson, America by River and Rail; or Notes by the Way on the New World and Its People (London, 1858), 113-114; Mackay, Life and Liberty, 307-308; Bromley, Woman’s Wanderings, 15-16; Kingsford, Impressions of the West and South, 76-78; and J. M. Mackie, From Cape Cod to Dixie and the Tropics (New York, 1864), 107-109. Mackie noticed that “all the fashion of Charleston will be met, at the hour of twilight, promenading on this smoothly laid sea wall [the Battery] ... hence has grown up the proverb, that the Charlestonians live but during two months of the year -- in February, for the sake of the races, and in May, for that of the promenade upon the Battery” (109).
A new image of the city developed over the old one: the image of the "planter’s city" superimposed itself over the image of the "colonial city". Charleston's elite was consistent in choosing the neighborhood in which to live, so that from the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century the houses of the most prominent planters tended to cluster around the same areas. These areas were where the Manigaults, the Izards, the Heywards, the Middletons, the Aikens, the Allstons, the Draytons, and the few others who owned hundreds of slaves and properties worth thousands of dollars lived. It was a tiny elite of only 130 families, constituting less than 1 per cent of the total population, but it was made up of extremely powerful individuals who had been able to adapt Charleston's layout to their own needs as a distinctive social class.  

Like Charleston, Palermo enjoyed a glorious moment in the eighteenth century. Palermo was the largest city in Sicily and the leading port for the export of wheat. Its wealth largely depended on the overall course of the wheat trade. Until the late sixteenth century world demand was such that wheat was consistently the leading Sicilian export. By this time the city already had a population of 100,000 inhabitants, which was fed by the products of wheat-grown latifondi that also exported for the world market. The latifondi were in the hands of an aristocracy which included both old and recently ennobled families.  

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a general downturn in the world economy led to a decline in the wheat trade and to a general movement of the wealthiest noble families from the countryside to the city, where they became absentee landowners, like the Charleston planters. By the beginning of the

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eighteenth century, when the economy had recovered and wheat was again the leading Sicilian export, the most important wheat growing latifondisti had become an urban aristocracy, living off the rent of their landed estates in the countryside in luxurious fashion. 123

Like Charleston, Palermo had a special relationship with its surroundings. Since the Middle Ages, the area all around the city walls -- the Conca d’Oro -- had been planted with gardens where lemons and oranges grew. In the eighteenth century, this area became the favorite place of retreat for the landed aristocracy living in the city. Like the planters of Charleston, the nobles of Palermo wanted to escape the damp and unhealthy summer climate and live in a cool place. However, unlike their Charleston counterparts, the nobles of Palermo fled from the city to the countryside and built a series of villas around the urban area. 124

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new restructuring of the world economy led to a decline in the wheat trade and a rise in the demand for citrus and oranges. Although the Conca d’Oro quickly became one of the regions of supply for the latter two crops, Palermo -- like Charleston -- fell in decay for much of the nineteenth century. Its population rose to 200,000 inhabitants between 1800 and 1860, but the economy was stagnating and the post-1815 Bourbon regime greatly diminished the importance of the city by making it the capital of merely one of the seventeen Sicilian administrative provinces. However, on the eve of Unification, the landed aristocracy of Palermo was still a very powerful class that used the city’s port for both the wheat and citrus trade and that enjoyed a very rich social life. 125

122 On the wheat-growing economy of western Sicily, see Schneider, The Political Economy of Western Sicily; O. Cancila, Impresa, redditi, mercato nella Sicilia moderna (Palermo, 1993), 235-255; and Verga, La Sicilia dei grani.
123 On the aristocrats’ retreat from the countryside to the city, see Cancila, Impresa, redditi e mercato, 255-285; Romeo, Il Risorgimento in Sicilia; and Renda, Storia della Sicilia, Vol. I.
124 On eighteenth-century Palermo, see Pitre, La vita a Palermo cento e più anni fa. On the historic origins of the eighteenth-century aristocratic villas near Palermo, see Gallo, L’alba dei Gattopardi; De Seta and Di Mauro, Palermo; and Chirco, Palermo.
Throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the landed aristocracy modified the layout of Palermo in substantial ways. The most prominent families built large palaces along the Cassaro and the Strada Nuova and, after 1720, they started colonizing the northern and southern surroundings of the city by building villas in the regions called Piana dei Colli and Bagheria. Although the city walls were not dismantled, as happened in Charleston, Palermo expanded quickly in the same directions in which the nobility built their villas: roads were laid out and quarters were constructed. Soon, the focus of much of the social life of Palermo shifted from the old Quattro Canti to the new northern street crossing called Quattro Canti di Campagna, where the road that led to the villas of the wealthiest aristocrats began. Like Charleston, Palermo also expanded towards the sea and, by the early nineteenth century, the walk along the seaside -- called Marina -- had become the equivalent of Charleston’s Battery. It is clear from prints of the 1840s and 1860s that the Marina, which was flanked by some of the finest palaces belonging to noble families, was the favourite walk of upper class ladies and gentlemen. 126

Travelers wrote a good deal about the villas of Palermo and the Marina, which were considered the two most outstanding features of the city and which were, sometimes, included in the Italian Grand Tour. At the end of the eighteenth century, Brydone and Swinburne described the villas as “beautiful monuments of the taste and magnificence of the Sicilian nobility and gentry” and called the Marina “one of the greatest pleasures of the nobility of Palermo.” 127 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Thompson and Russell penned similar comments. 128 A few

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127 The present state of Sicily and Malta, 136, 150.

128 See L. Thompson, Sicily and its inhabitants: Observations made during a residence in that country in the year 1809 and 1810 (London: Henry Colburn, 1813), 117-120; and Russell, A Tour through
years later, Boid described the Marina in particularly acute terms by stressing how just above the public walk “a long range of palaces stands towering with aristocratic pride to contrast ... the splendid magnificence” of “the glittering waves of the thyrrenian sea”. Bartlett’s description of the Marina in the 1860s calls to mind Charleston’s Battery, since on one hand it was a place that all social classes could enjoy: “the Marina is the great boast and pride of the Palermitans.” On the other hand, in the evening, the walk became a stage for the display of wealth of the urban aristocracy: “it is not until the cool of the evening that all the genteeler portion of the Palermitans pour out of the gate, and begin to throng the footway of the Marina.”

Similar to what happened in Charleston, a new image developed and lived side by side with the old one of the “vicereoyal city”: the image of the “aristocratic city” centered around elegant walkways, fashionable streets, and villas surrounded by green. Palermo’s elite was as consistent as Charleston’s aristocracy in choosing where to build its villas and palaces. The houses of the most prominent families clustered around the Cassaro and the Strada Nuova within the city walls, and in the suburbs of Piana dei Colli (North) and Bagheria (South). The Trabia, Butera, Palagonia, Belmonte, Lampedusa, Resuttano, Valguarnera, and the few other families that belonged to the titled nobility and owned immense lands in the latifondi of the countryside all owned palaces in Palermo and villas in the immediate surroundings of the city. Like Charleston’s aristocracy, they constituted a tiny elite -- the wealthiest individuals among the 4,000 listed as possidenti (landowners) in the city census -- but one that had been capable of radically

Sicily, 28, 35. Russell called the evening movement on the Marina “a rendez vous of the whole city” (28).

129 Boid, Travels through Sicily and the Lipari islands, 13-14.
130 W. H. Bartlett, Pictures from Sicily (London: T. Nelson & Son, 1869), 241, 246. The most famous description of the Marina is the one by sociologist Oreste Lo Valvo, who analyzed Palermitan society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in his book La vita in Palermo trenta e più anni fa in confronto a quella attuale (Palermo, 1907). Lo Valvo pointed out the presence of different types of wealthy individuals, such as noblemen, professionals, industrialists, and merchants, who gave the walks on the Marina a particular elitistic flavor; at the same time, the simultaneous presence of crowds of individuals belonging to the lower classes softened its distinctively aristocratic character.
restructuring the image of Palermo, creating an image of it that was associated with their individual power, rather than the public power of the state.\footnote{131 On Palermo as aristocratic city, see Cancila, Palermo, 9-18; and De Seta and Di Mauro, Palermo.}

The elites of Charleston and Palermo succeeded in modifying the layout of the two cities and in the process they created new images of these urban centers, images that were closely related to the domination of powerful members of the landed aristocracy over both society and economy. The modification of the layout went hand in hand with the creation of new architectural traditions, since the houses built by the elites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries acquired a very distinct style.

This style was actually more of a collection of different styles, which were unique adaptations of the architectural conventions of the time to the local setting; they were the quintessence of the eighteenth-nineteenth century idea of “representational” architecture because they gave a clear idea of the social status, of the economic power, and later, of the political ideas of the owners. Both in Charleston and Palermo, the aristocratic image of the city was based on models of aristocratic mansions that had developed through time and had become standard architectural features of the city. In both cases, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the wealthiest families led the changes in architectural taste by building houses that were highly original in their mode of “representation”.

In the eighteenth century, two kinds of architectural models for aristocratic mansions developed in Charleston: the “single house” and the “double house”. The “single house” was Charleston’s version of an urban palace; it was usually a three-story building, whose entrance was on the side and led into the ground floor of a columnade -- called piazza -- in front of the inner court of the house, rather than into the house itself. While the false entrance served as protection and barrier against street life, the court functioned as private enclosed space protected from indiscreet looks. The “double house” was Charleston’s version of the English Georgian country house. Unlike the “single house”, the “double house” had a
frontal access through a two-story high *portico*, surrounded by columns and provided with a stairs on both sides. As Peter Coclanis remarks, "the double house ... was, in essence, Charleston's 'Big House', an expression of social power, the proud symbol of social rank", meaning that the "double house" was Charleston's adaptation of the symbolic and representational architecture of the plantation's 'Big House' to an urban mansion. 132

Charleston's "single houses" can be compared with the urban palaces of Palermo, most of which were built in the eighteenth century. Like the former, the latter provided aristocratic families with an enclosed and sheltered open space -- the courtyard -- right in the middle of the city. However, the architectural structure used to build a buffer between the private life of the aristocrats and the public life in the streets was different because of the different climate and the different architectural tradition. The urban palaces of Palermo were heavy Baroque buildings with monumental fronts and doorways which led directly to a staircase leading to the upper floor (*piano nobile*). 133

Charleston's "double houses" can be likened to the suburban villas of Palermo. Like the former, the latter were frontally oriented buildings with an emphasis on the impression of the entrance; the imposing stairs in the front -- which were a peculiarity of Sicilian Baroque architecture -- gave a sense of distance and authority that was similar to the impression the columnades of the "double houses" gave. In both cases, the symbolic purpose of the construction was to convey the idea of a relation between the architectural features of the building and the power exercised by the owner on his landed estates. In the case of Charleston's "double house", the very architectural structure of the building was "representational": the imposing columnade in front of the construction immediately reminded viewers of the

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plantation's 'Big House'. In the case of Palermo's villas, the "representation" was more subtle; the monumental stairs, the main entrance on the upper floor and the disposition of the servants accommodation on the ground level on the two sides of the main building indirectly reminded onlookers of the relation of dependency between the feudal lord and the peasants on the *latifondi*.\(^{134}\)

Between the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the architectural style of the aristocratic mansions of Charleston and Palermo underwent a series of transformations. The genius of some native architects, combined with the desire for innovation felt by particular members of the landed elites, gave rise to some of the most refined and original buildings in both cities. Free to operate according to their personal tastes, the architects built the new mansions adapting widespread stylistic models to Charleston's and Palermo's distinctive architectural traditions.

In comparing the relation between the landed elites and the change in the image of the two cities, it is particularly important to look at the context in which native architects adapted to the needs of local aristocratic architecture two styles inspired by similar models and which were roughly contemporaneous: the Greek Revival and the Neoclassical.\(^{135}\)

The Greek Revival style flourished across the United States in the decades between 1800 and 1830. It first was employed in the public buildings of the cities of the Northeast coast, and soon after became the favored style of the young American republic. Greek Revival style was centered on the imitation of the rows of columns that supported the Greek temples. In the South, planters found Greek Revival


\(^{135}\) For basic information and description of the main features of the Neoclassical and Greek Revival styles, see D. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
especially congenial to the architecture of the big houses, because its imposing frontal columns gave the visitors an exact idea of the owner’s power and wealth.\textsuperscript{136}

The Greek Revival reached Charleston only in the 1830s; traditional explanations of this late arrival link the delay to Charleston’s economic decline and cultural isolation in the nineteenth century. Even though the very first Greek Revival buildings were designed by Charleston architect Robert Mills in 1822, the explosion in Greek Revival architecture occurred in Charleston in the late 1830s, when the Charleston Hotel (1838) and the Hibernian society (1839) were built. Together with these public buildings, several planters’ and merchants’ houses on the Battery – such as the Edmonston Alston House (1828), the William Roper House (1838) and the William Ravenel House (1845) – were imposing examples of Greek Revival elite mansions in the heart of the city.\textsuperscript{137}

The Neoclassical style flourished throughout Europe between 1780 and 1810. It was used for a variety of different buildings, and its spread across the continent was partly related to the spread of Napoleonic absolutism, which regarded it as the favored style of imperial France. Neoclassical style, which in Sicily was based on the reproduction of architectural features present in the Sicilian Greek temples, reached Sicily in the second half of the 1760s. Its appearance is usually linked to the work of a particularly innovative architect, Venanzio Marvuglia, who used it in the construction of several buildings between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.\textsuperscript{138}

Neoclassical style had its heyday in Palermo between 1790 and 1820 and it is related to the construction of a few public buildings and several villas. Among the public buildings, the most important is the Gymnasium of the Orto Botanico, built


\textsuperscript{138} On Vincenzo Marvuglia and the Neoclassical in Sicily, see A. I. Lima, \textit{Storia dell’architettura, Sicilia, Ottocento} (Palermo: Flacovio, 1995), VII-VIII; V. Capitano, \textit{Venanzio Marvuglia, architetto}. 
in forms of a Doric temple by Leone Duforny between 1789 and 1795; it is worth noticing that between 1789 and 1808, the Greek temple of Segesta -- one of the best examples of Sicilian Doric architecture -- underwent extensive restoration. Significantly, the two most important villas in Neoclassical style belonged to two of the most important families of the liberal nobility: the Belmonte and the Cottone. Whilst Villa Belmonte all’Acquasanta was built by Marvuglia between 1799 and 1802, Villa Cottone -- which later became the *Istituto Agrario Castelnuovo* -- was built by Antonino Gentile in 1819.\(^{139}\)

Both the Greek Revival and Neoclassical styles appeared at a specific time in the histories of Charleston and Palermo, and it is no accident that it was also a time in which the two landed elites were constructing their own images of the two cities. As part of this process, the two elites looked for architectural models capable of expressing both their emerging class consciousness and their incipient nationalism.

In the late 1830s, after the Nullification Crisis of 1832-1833, when South Carolina planters first had opposed the policy of the Federal government, Charleston’s aristocracy perceived itself as a conscious minority bound together by similar economic interests and representing the true republican virtues of the American nation, virtues that were imagined to be rooted in the Greek democratic and Roman republican experiences in antiquity. The Greek Revival style, as is clear from the most impressive Greek Revival building in Charleston -- Roper House -- clearly shows that the adaptation of Greek models was the highest stage of “representational” architecture. Its imposing columnade was at once an expression of the power of the owner and a reminder of the architectural tradition of the Greek city states.\(^{140}\)

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\(^{140}\) On the relation between Greek Revival, Ancient Greece and American republican ideals, see Abbott, *Historic Charleston*, 143-145.
Palermo was the center of the British protectorate of Sicily and of the war against the Napoleonic regime in the Italian South between the 1790’s and the early 1800’s. During this period, Sicily, for the first time, experienced autonomy from the continental part of the South under the watchful eye of the British, and this experience helped shape a sense of national identity among the Sicilian aristocrats. The image of Palermo that the Sicilian landed elite was building according to its own needs was also an image of Sicilian nationalism. Therefore, the use of architectural models coming from the Sicilian Greek temples was related both to the idea of majesty -- as is clear from the example of Villa Belmonte all’Acquasanta-- and to the idea of continuation of an ancient regional cultural tradition. 141

The landed elites of Charleston and Palermo clearly used the cities in which they lived as stages for their own public lives. Their influences on the urban and architectural features of the cityscape become clear when one examines the transformations of the layout and the repeated “invention” of architectural traditions. The architecture of the aristocratic mansions, in particular, is an excellent example of “representation”, since it clearly demonstrates the link between the economic power and social status of the owner through a series of symbolic features. A link can be also discerned between architectural features and the political ideas of the wealthiest families. In this respect, the spread of Greek Revival and Neoclassical styles must be seen as closely related to the political climate of the time. It is no accident that the two styles appeared at a specific point in time in both cities, the moment at which the first instances of “elitist nationalism” manifested themselves in South Carolina and Sicily.

Unlike the elites of the two larger souths, the elites of South Carolina and Sicily had particularly strong regional identities due to the historical development of the

141 On the relation between Neoclassical and the architecture of Greek temples in Sicily, see Lanza Tomasi, Le ville di Palermo, 282-290.
twoipheries as “insular societies”. Moreover, through a long process of mingling between their older and newer sections, the two regional elites grew more homogenous and were able to overcome those ideological differences – such as the one between the patriarchal and the paternalistic ethos – which were instrumental in dividing the southern ruling classes of the United States and Italy.

The Constitution of 1808 in South Carolina and the Constitution of 1812 in Sicily sanctioned in the law the alliance between older and newer sections of the elites of the two regions and provided the background for the political development and articulation of their particular “elitist nationalism”. The elites intended the Constitutions as the legal cornerstones of the two nations. When South Carolina went through the Nullification Crisis in 1832 and nearly seceded from the Union in 1850, the Constitution of 1808 was instrumental in recomposing internal divisions within the elite. On the other hand, when Sicily attempted to separate from the Kingdom in 1820 and in 1848, the elite sought a return to the Constitution of 1812.

The two crises of 1832 and 1850 in South Carolina, and of 1820 and 1848 in Sicily, tested the unity of the elites regarding major political issues. In both regions, there were differences in the way the old and the new sections of the elites envisioned the relation between center and periphery. These differences prevented them from developing South Carolina and Sicily into two full-blown nations until 1860, when secession and separation occurred.
Chapter Six
Elitist Nationalism and Political Change

This chapter examines the political history of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno between 1815 and 1860, with a particular focus on South Carolina and Sicily. It argues that in both cases the regional tradition of “elitist nationalism” found political expression in response to the pressures brought to bear upon regional elites by the federal government in the United States and by the Bourbon government in southern Italy. In the United States, federal opposition to South Carolinian nationalism was linked to the general issue of the Congressional dispute between the industrializing North and the slaveholding South. In southern Italy, the suppression of Sicilian autonomy was linked to the Bourbon monarchy’s efforts at provoking changes in the distribution of power between center and periphery. In both cases, the needs of a national policy of modernization increased pressure on regional ruling classes and accelerated their move towards an extremist version of “elitist nationalism” against the government’s intrusions in local affairs.

A series of crises defined the relation between peripheral elites and central administration in both South Carolina and Sicily. The Nullification Crisis in South Carolina and the Revolution of 1820 in Sicily were the first instances in which articulate members of the elite expressed their desire for autonomy from the two national governments. However, it was the Crisis of 1850 in South Carolina and the Revolution of 1848 in Sicily that defined the possibilities and established the limits of elitist nationalism in the two regions. Both in South Carolina and in Sicily, the ruling elites became increasingly aware that the strict regionalism that characterized their programs for independence was hindering the achievement of their aims. Consequently, in both regions, elitist nationalists began to look for collaboration from outside their specific regions in the struggle against the governments’ centralizing institutions. However, the outcome of the two elites’ search for collaboration was radically different, since South Carolinian elitist nationalists ended up leading the formation of a southern national government — the
Confederate States of America -- which struggled against the American federal government, while Sicilian elitist nationalists ended up renouncing to their dream of an independent Sicilian nation in order to preserve their internal power through an alliance with the Piedmontese liberal monarchy against the Bourbon Kingdom.

Compromises and Aborted Revolutions

In the United States, the period between 1815 and 1820 saw a deterioration in the relations between the southern states and the federal government. This breakdown originated from the debate around the organization of the new western territories that were going to be annexed to the United States. Planters, who represented the interests of the South in Congress, sought to expand slavery and to secure virgin soil on which to plant cotton. Northern representatives in Congress, who were already uneasy over the issue of constitutional compromise with slaveholders, wanted to prevent slavery's expansion across the Mississippi. ¹

The crisis exploded in full blown form in 1819, when Congress considered a bill for the admission of Missouri as a slave state. Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed an amendment imposing gradual emancipation upon Missouri. Southern representatives took Tallmadge's proposal as an interference with slavery and as a violation of previous compromises. The issue is particularly important because it was the first time that Congress divided clearly along sectional lines between North and South, and because it was the first time that southern representatives made an explicit connection between state's rights and slavery. Southerners argued that the Constitution could not be used to impose restrictions on

the individual rights of either old or new states. Planters believed that, in the long run, this policy would lead to full-scale abolition.  

The Compromise of 1820, according to which Missouri entered as a slave state and Maine as a free state, while slavery was confined south of the 36 30’ line, prevented more radical action on the side of southerners. However, in its essence, the Missouri episode showed that southern planters considered a strong centralizing institution such as the federal government as a threat to their local authority and a challenge to their power in their respective states. Still, there was no unity of thought and action among different sections of southern elites on how to defend slavery and state rights and how to prevent further interference. In most of the South, “elitist nationalism” was in an embryonic stage, and it was to remain so for several years.  

The Nullification Crisis showed the different reaction of South Carolina’s elite from the rest of the South regarding the issue of federal interference in local affairs. As early as 1824, Congress had started debating the introduction of a new tariff that would have increased duties on finished goods, following a protectionist policy advocated by northern industrialists. If the bill passed, the burden would rest mainly on the shoulders of southern planters and farmers for the benefit of northern manufacturers. In 1828, under John Quincy Adams, a divided Congress approved the tariff, which southerners called “Tariff of Abomination”. Opposition to the tariff seemed to unite southern elites around a common interest. From Maryland to Georgia, the southern ruling class was rethinking its relationship with the federal government. Again, planters and slaveholders felt that in time a northern-dominated Congress would impose the abolition of slavery upon the South. However, planters

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and politicians from different southern states failed to elaborate a coherent argument that defended the interests of the southern nation as a whole against interference from the federal government. In 1828, southern nationalism did not exist beyond a vague general agreement on the defense of the slave economy.⁴

When Andrew Jackson, a southern planter, was elected President with significant southern support, many southern voters saw in him a potential savior from northern economic dominance. However Jackson almost immediately demonstrated his support for the Tariff of 1828, provoking a major constitutional crisis in the early 1830s. The South Carolina elite assumed the vanguard position in the movement for protection of the rights of the southern states. In 1831, John C. Calhoun published his South Carolina Exposition and Protest which argued in favor of individual states’ rights within the Union and against the Tariff as unconstitutional. Calhoun’s theory justified South Carolina’s veto of the Tariff of 1828 by claiming that the individual states retained their sovereignty and allowed the federal government to exercise only the particular powers enumerated in the Constitution. Therefore, the Tariff was an usurpation of power, and individual states could veto or nullify the federal law since it was unconstitutional. Supporters of the state’s veto called several state conventions in order to debate the possibility of nullifying the tariff. In March 1833, South Carolina issued the Nullification Proclamation. By this time, Jackson had denounced nullification as treason and was ready to send federal troops into Charleston. However, later in that month, Congress passed a compromise tariff which progressively reduced rates so that by 1842 they would have returned to the same level as in 1816. Although no other southern state supported South Carolina during the Nullification Crisis, it was the first time that southern rights came close to being defended by the force of arms.⁵


Several historians — including John McCardell, William Freehling, James Banner, Kenneth Greenberg, and Robert Wier — have elaborated upon the reasons for South Carolina’s peculiar behavior during the Nullification crisis. South Carolinian extremists have been seen as the first proponents of southern nationalism because of their commitments both to the preservation of slavery and to state rights in the South. The short-term causes of South Carolinian extremism lay in the state’s deep economic depression following the banking panic of 1819. Throughout the 1820s the prices for staples were low; from 1818 to 1831 cotton prices fell from thirty-one cents a pound to eight cents a pound. The cotton planters in the upcountry were especially hard hit by the depression, but rice planters faced hard times as well. Thousands left for the new soil in the southwestern states, where they could start afresh. The Tariff of 1828 dealt the final blow to this already difficult situation. As far as South Carolina’s elite was concerned, the federal government was abusing its power to increase pressure on impoverished cotton and rice planters. It comes scarcely as a surprise that opposition to the tariff found the already mingled older and newer parts of South Carolina’s ruling elite united on the same ground. In his inaugural address delivered in 1832, newly elected State Governor Robert Hayne, Nullification, in particular, see W. W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), L. K. Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 115-144; and W. Edgar, South Carolina: A History (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 330-337. 6 See McCardell, The Idea of a Southern Nation, 27-37; Freehling, Road to Disunion, 213-228; J. M. Banner, “The Problem of South Carolina” in S. Elkins and E. McKittrick, eds., The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial (New York: Knopf, 1974); K. S. Greenberg, Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 65-84; R. Weir, “The South Carolinian as Extremist” in R. Weir, “The Last of American Freemens”: Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South (New York: Mercer University Press, 1977). 7 The economic crisis of South Carolina in the 1820s is discussed in J. G. Van Deusen, Economic Bases of Disunion in South Carolina (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928); in A.G. Smith, Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1958), 47-53; and in Freehling, Prelude to Civil War, 25-48. 8 On this particular point, see J. B. Stewart, “‘A Great Talking and Eating Machine’: Patriarchy, Mobilization and the Dynamics of Nullification in South Carolina”, Civil War History, 27:3 (1981); Stewart writes, “the development of South Carolina’s political life from 1800 until Nullification is best captured in documents which bespeak dynastic advancement — genealogies, land titles, and wills. Nondescript upcountry men with names like McDuffie, Hammond, Hampton, Miller, and Calhoun forged alliances by marrying into tidewater fortunes. Coastal aristocrats, meantime, enlarged family holding in upcountry.” (201)
managed to capture the spirit of the fight of free white South Carolinians against the intrusion of the federal government in local affairs by talking about the “great struggle in which we are engaged for the preservation of our rights and liberties”, a struggle which was linked to the recognition of the “SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY OF THE STATE” and “HER SOVEREIGN WILL”. In connecting the opposition to the tariff to the preservation of rights and liberties, Governor Hayne made clear that the Nullification crisis was a struggle that the freeborn population of South Carolina, led by its planter class, was fighting in order to preserve its privileges over its slaves. At the same time, he linked the struggle for preservation of these privileges with the recognition of state sovereignty, thereby providing official support to South Carolinian elitist nationalism.⁹

John C. Calhoun, himself a cotton planter, elaborated the first coherent theory of elitist nationalism in the Exposition and in later writings. He argued that “the northern majority taxes enslaved the southern minority”, that significant minorities could control states, and that minority states could veto majority laws. The idea of a minority protecting itself from the unconstitutional acts of a majority “which could pervert its powers to oppress and plunder” it, was particularly appealing to South Carolinian planters, who saw the preservation of their power as landowners and slaveowners threatened by the Government’s economic measures.¹⁰ At the same time, Calhoun’s theory provided at once the answer to both internal and external threats to slaveholding power in South Carolina. Drawing on the tradition of eighteenth-century republicanism, Calhoun justified the control of the upper

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classes over the masses and tied it to a nationalist struggle against majority rule in Congress. In his posthumously published Disquisition on Government, Calhoun wrote his most complete theoretical statement against the tyranny of the majority. According to Calhoun, majority rule could result in the implementation of political patronage by demagogic spoilsmen if “the poor and ignorant” did not have “leaders and protectors” to take decisions for them against “the wealthy and ambitious”. As William Freehling has noted, this theory linked restricted political representation to the elite’s paternalistic control of the superior over the inferior and, at the same time, justified the property qualifications necessary to gain access to the state legislature of South Carolina. The unique features of the state, tightly ruled by a minority planter class, which took decisions for the majority of the population and considered itself the legitimate elite of an aristocratic nation, were inserted by Calhoun in the context of a complex theory of political science and were legitimized by the impeccable logic of his argument. South Carolinian elitist nationalism found no better expression than Calhoun’s writings.  

The Nullification crisis provided the occasion for the rising to national prominence of a generation of articulate planters and intellectuals, who represented de facto the political elite of the state. During the crisis, several leaders emerged in the state, apart from John C. Calhoun and Robert Hayne; the most important were Thomas Cooper, Langdon Cheves, A. P. Butler, Chancellor Harper, Francis Pickens, John Lyde Wilson, and Joel Poinsett. The most important characteristic which linked all of them was the absolute conviction that South Carolina was a

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separate cultural and social entity from the rest of the United States and that it needed to be recognized as such in political terms.\(^\text{12}\)

A particular incident reported by the English traveller G. Featherstonhaugh tells us a great deal about the general attitude of South Carolinian nationalists at the time of Nullification. In 1835, Featherstonhaugh was invited to a dinner by Thomas Cooper, President of the South Carolina College, together with several professors and gentlemen from the area around Columbia. He heard one of them say the following words: “if you ask *me* if I am an American, my answer is *No, Sir*, I am a South Carolinian”\(^\text{13}\). This phrase, coming from an upcountry gentleman, who was most likely also a wealthy planter, suggests that South Carolinians considered the Nullification crisis as the first occasion on which they could express freely nationalist feelings about their state of birth. The fact that these feelings were linked by the ruling elite to an ideology of domination of the superior over the inferior was the main reason why the experience of Nullification provided an important background of action for the subsequent fulfillment of elitist nationalist aims.

Nullification also provided an important background in that, for the first time, the South Carolinian elite succeeded in relating its struggle for the creation of an elitist nation to the aim of creating a free and independent South Carolina in the mind of the people; planters and politicians managed to arouse public sentiment for the Nullification issue and mobilize citizens in every corner of the state to fight for freedom from the tyranny of a federal government that they had come to consider as the sole source of their economic and social problems. Capturing the general mood and speaking as it was the South Carolinian elite itself acknowledging the vital contribution of the people of the state in supporting the Nullification struggle, Henry Laurens Pinckney, editor of the nationalist paper Charleston Mercury, wrote in 1832:


\(^{13}\) G. Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States* (London, 1838), 341.
We are grateful that the people have been awakened to their interests ... that they not only love and support liberty, but will support and uphold whatever constitutional measures may be adopted by the state to preserve it for themselves and transmit it to their children ... the time, indeed, has arrived when every patriot who really loves the state or who prizes as he should the inestimable birthrights as a citizen, should redouble his exertions ... can anyone doubt that if the people of South Carolina were thoroughly united, the American system would soon crumble into atoms?”

The essence of elitist nationalism as an ideology of power over the masses could have not been expressed more clearly: the unity of the people standing behind their political leaders was the decisive factor in bringing about the birth of a South Carolinian nation and make the “American system crumble into atoms.” Politicians and theorists acknowledged the importance of the people’s support for elitist nationalist aims; the people’s rights and liberties were the main concern in Governor Hayne’s speech on South Carolina’s sovereignty, whilst the people’s delegation of power to selected “leaders and protectors was a particularly important element in John C. Calhoun’s Disquisition on Government. The Nullification Crisis succeeded in uniting the South Carolinian planter elite over a common aim, but at the same time it proved beyond doubt that elitist nationalists needed the unified support of the citizens of the state in order to realize their political program.

During the Crisis, not all South Carolinians had responded positively to the call to fight for their state of birth; several pockets of support for the federal government remained and had seriously threatened to compromise the outcome of the Nullification struggle. After the 1833 compromise, the Unionists were politically persecuted by the Nullifiers; it was a struggle that divided the state throughout the 1830s and prevented the achievement of the internal harmony which was the necessary presupposition to the construction of a nation. Therefore, the next task of South Carolinian elitist nationalists would be to refine and elaborate the idea of a South Carolinian nation so to make it attractive to the majority of the people of the

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15 On the elite’s failed attempt at mobilizing the majority of the population of South Carolina during...
state; only then it could serve as the substance of a nationalist struggle against the federal government in the next confrontation over the issue of local power.

As in the American South, in the Italian South, the period between 1815 and 1820 was a time of transition in which the tensions between center and periphery grew until they eventually resulted in a major crisis. For the entire five-year period, the Mezzogiorno saw an increase in the Bourbon government’s suppression of the provinces’ demand for regional autonomy. The newly formed Kingdom of the Two Sicilies under Ferdinand I sought to find a compromise between the conservative and liberal sections of the elites. Consequently, the new administrative monarchy retained the same bureaucratic apparatus of the Napoleonic period and the same high civil servants, who were also expert technicians in their own fields. Although Ferdinand I abolished all the previous Constitutions and restored the absolutist character of the Monarchy, it is fair to say that to a certain degree he also began a program of state modernization. 16

In its essence, the new state modeled its institutions on the principles which had led to the abolition of feudal rights. It sought to create a uniform basis of consensus amongst the new landed bourgeoisie and in the portion of the old nobility which resided in Naples and was closer to the King. Above all, the new state made a serious attempt at centralizing its institutions by creating a uniform bureaucratic system of departments (dipartimenti) which replaced the traditional regions and controlled local government through the appointment of general administrators (intendenti). During the five years between 1815 and 1820, the Monarchy issued a series of laws which rationalized and simplified the civil service, the recruitment of judges, the finances, and the military structure throughout the Kingdom. At the same time, local officials in the provincial town and city governments were

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16 On the early Bourbon monarchy’s attempt at modernizing the infrastructures of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, see A. Spagnoletti, Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 134-158, and R. Romeo, “Momenti e problemi della Restaurazione nel Regno delle Due Sicilie (1815-1820)” in Mezzogiorno e Sicilia nel Risorgimento (Naples, 1963).
recruited through special lists (*liste degli eleggibili*) based on the amount of land
owned rather than the possession of a noble title. 17

According to several historians – most notably Enrica Di Ciommo, Angelantonio
Spagnoletti, Paolo Pezzino, and Antonio De Francesco -- the old nobility in the
provinces resisted the centralizing attempts of the administrative monarchy. 18 At
the same time, these very attempts offered the newer sections of the landed elites
avenues for the achievement of social distinction at the local level. Since local
representative were chosen on the basis of wealth rather than title, the landed
bourgeoisie benefited more than other classes from the new administrative system.
Still, the extreme centralization of the state structures cut against traditions of local
authority, which were held by both the conservative and the liberal part of the
nobility. The division between these different sections of the landed elites on the
issue of local resistance to centralization and modernization from above showed
that in most regions the ruling class was not sufficiently unified to take effective
action against the Monarchy. In most of the Kingdom, there was no tradition of
“elitist nationalism” and resistance to external intrusion of local affairs, as there was
in Sicily. 19

In 1820 an institutional crisis shook the foundations of the southern Kingdom.
Sicily played a major role in what has come to be called the Revolution of 1820.
The reforms carried out by the administrative monarchy for the previous five years
met the opposition of the aristocracy in western Sicily. The Sicilian aristocracy had

17 The reforms of the administrative monarchy in relation to the local governement in the provinces
of the Kingdom are described in A. Scirocco, “L’amministrazione civile: istituzioni, funzionali e
carriere”, and A. Spagnoletti, “Centri e periferie nello stato napoletano del primo Ottocento”, both
in: A. Massafra, ed., Il Mezzogiorno preunitario. Economia, societa, istituzioni (Bari: Dedalo, 1988);
see also Spagnoletti, Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie, 159-172.
18 See E. Di Ciommo, “Elites provinciali e potere borbonico: note per una ricerca comparata”, in A.
Massafra, ed., Il Mezzogiorno preunitario. Spagnoletti, “Centri e periferie nello stato napoletano; A.
De Francesco, “Cultura costituzionale e conflitto politico nell’ età della Restaurazione” in F. Benigno
and C. Torrisi, eds., Elites e potere in Sicilia dal Medioevo ad oggi (Catanzaro: Meridiana Libri,
1995); and P. Pezzino, “L’intendente e le scimmie. Autonomia e accentramento nella Sicilia di
19 On the “elitist nationalist” tradition of Sicily, see F. Renda, Storia della Sicilia dal 1860 al 1970,
Vol. I: I caratteri originari e gli anni dell’unificazione italiana (Palermo: Sellerio, 1984), 33-36;
according to Renda, in the nineteenth century the nobility took the lead of Sicilian nationalism and
transformed it into a movement for the extreme defense of its privileges (33).
a long tradition of autonomy from the central government; during the British occupation, the Sicilian Parliament had issued the Constitution of 1812, which called for the formation of a Sicilian national government under the control of the landed elites. Between 1815 and 1817, the Bourbon monarchy abolished the Constitution of 1812 and took a series of steps to centralize the government institutions while suppressing all forms of political and cultural autonomy. For the first time in history, Sicily did not have the traditional division in three valleys (Val di Noto, Val Demone, Val di Mazara), which were both cultural and administrative areas. Rather, it was divided in seven administrative regions which lacked any internal cultural consistency. Together with this, the administrative monarchy reformed the local government according to the system of the intendenti and the liste degli eleggibili. These reforms, which were intended to support administrative centralization, went hand in hand with a program of economic modernization that encountered the opposition both of the old nobility, which saw the its influence diminishing, and of the new landed bourgeoisie, which had little to gain from the Bourbonic reforms. According to Lucy Riall, the impact of the reforms was particularly acute in the Sicilian countryside; the local nobility retained little of the fiscal privileges it used to enjoy over land and peasants, while local “magistrates were irritated by the appropriation of their judicial powers by the center”. The intendenti, who were the symbol of Bourbon modernization from above now became a symbol of the central government’s unpopularity and of its “weakness in the face of local power.”

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20 The constitution of 1812 is treated at length in Chapter Five.
In 1820, the landed aristocracy centered in the region around Palermo played a major role in the movement for the separation of Sicily from the rest of the Southern Kingdom and for the restoration of the Constitution of 1812. Both the old and the new parts of the western Sicilian elite united around a nationalist program and took control of popular protest in Palermo and in the countryside caused by economic depression and the high taxes brought by the Bourbon Kingdom. The revolutionary government formed immediately after the 14 July popular insurrection was dominated from the beginning by the nobility with very few bourgeois elements in it. In the following months, the revolutionaries, headed by the Prince of Villafranca, faced two main problems: the peasant revolution in the countryside and the opposition of the eastern Sicilian cities, which had sided with the Neapolitan government. To address the first issue, the revolutionary government created a special “security guard”, filled mostly with bourgeois, with the specific purpose of controlling the masses, restoring order, and defending private property. On the second issue, the revolutionary government sent 4,500 troops against the eastern cities of Messina, Catania, and Siracusa, and engaged in a bloody civil war which cost many lives and was a major cause of the end of the revolution. Weakened by the war and by internal dissent, the Sicilian revolutionary government fell a few months later under the siege conducted by the Neapolitan general Florestano Pepe.22

The Revolution of 1820 was the first movement for the separation of Sicily from the Bourbon Kingdom. According to a contemporary French observer, the Revolution “should have given back to Sicily the institutions that had been taken away from her”.23 It was also the last major crisis in which the nobility exercised a...
hegemonic role over the bourgeoisie and invoked the ghost of the Constitution of 1812. At the same time, the Revolution tightened the bonds between the Sicilian nobility and the landed bourgeoisie through the double fight conducted against both the Bourbon government’s policy of centralization and the fear of popular upheaval. The old and the new Sicilian propertied classes found themselves fighting a nationalist battle side by side against the suppression of local autonomy and against radical movements that threatened recent and traditional forms of landholding. In fact, the repressive measures that the Bourbon monarchy implemented after the 1820 Revolution in Sicily hit both noble and bourgeois elements involved in the upheaval. According to Francesco Renda, this led to an increasing radicalism among the ruling class of the island, which was deprived as a whole of its ability to govern over the masses, and which grew increasingly hostile toward the Neapolitan King and his bureaucracy.24

A particularly illuminating analysis of the behavior of the Sicilian ruling class in the 1820 Revolution is in the work of Francesco Paternò Castello. Paternò Castello, Prince of Raddusa, was a liberal nobleman who wrote a history of Sicily from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to 1830 (Saggio storico e politico sulla Sicilia dal cominciamento del sec. XIX al 1830) from the “elitist nationalist” point of view. In his analysis of the 1820 Revolution, Raddusa enunciated four key points in the political aims of the 1820 provisional government dominated by the liberal nobility: 1) the formation of a Sicilian Kingdom, 2) the adoption of the Constitution of 1812, 3) the unification of Sicily over a program of moderate autonomy, and 4) the protection of the social order through the formation of a National Guard among the propertied classes. The nobility and the bourgeoisie shared these common aims, which went in the direction of transforming the

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24 See Renda, Risorgimento e classi popolari; and Spagnoletti, Storia del regno delle Due Sicilie, 206-219.
nationalist upheaval into a revolution devoid of its most radical social content. The liberal part of the nobility, which was responsible for the creation of the Constitution of 1812, strongly supported the alliance with the bourgeois landowners against the threat of the popular guerrilla units (squadre) during the 1820 Revolution. However, the provisional government of 1820 did not manage to realize its objectives because of internal dissent between factions of the elite. Significantly, twenty-eight years later, the provisional government of the 1848 Revolution, dominated by both nobles and bourgeois elements, returned to the same political aims.25

Paradoxically, the further evolution of the tradition of elitist nationalism, which had begun with the establishment of the Constitution of the 1812, was facilitated by the Bourbon policy of establishing a property-based, rather than title-based, landowning class in the local councils (intendenze). The old and the new elite mixed together and found a common ground in the defense of both private property and local autonomy, the two bases of Sicilian elitist nationalism. However, the Revolution of 1820 showed that elitist nationalism was stronger in western Sicily, where the process of mixing between the nobility and bourgeoisie was more advanced, than in eastern Sicily, which was dominated by the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie.26

In South Carolina, the Nullification crisis had been instrumental in making the elite aware of the possibility of becoming a homogenous political aristocracy of an independent nation; at the same time, it had shown how deep the divisions were between the Nullifiers, who were extreme nationalists, and the Unionists, who were still attached to the federal government. Similarly, in Sicily the Revolution of 1820 was instrumental in prompting the elite's awareness of the necessity of becoming a unified ruling class; however, at the same time, it showed that the Sicilian elite was

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26 On the difference between eastern and western Sicily during the 1820 Revolution, see De Francesco, La Guerra di Sicilia, and "Cultura costituzionale e conflitto politico". See also, for the larger context, Giarrizzo, "La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all'Unità", 667-708.
divided on a regional basis and had not yet completed the process of amalgamation between the older and newer sections. Whilst the western part of Sicily was dominated by advocates of Separatism, the eastern part was still loyal to the Neapolitan King. Before becoming a successful separatist movement, Sicilian elitist nationalism had to resolve this fundamental contradiction.

*The Crisis of 1850 and the Revolution of 1848*

In the United States, after the Nullification crisis, the relation between the South and the federal government remained tense. The main issue of contention was the expansion of slavery beyond the borders of the recognized states under the 1820 Missouri compromise. In 1845, under President James Polk, Texas and Florida were annexed to the Union as slave states, and in 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico. Soon after, David Wilmot, a Democratic Senator, proposed an amendment according to which the Mexican territories conquered during the war would have been free from slavery. The Wilmot Proviso outraged southerner planters and politicians, especially southern Democrats who had supported the war hoping to secure new territories where cotton could be cultivated. They now felt betrayed by their own party. In response, South Carolinian John C. Calhoun wrote the famous Calhoun Resolutions declaring that the new territories were common possessions of the states; therefore Congress had no right to prevent citizens from taking slaves into them. 27

In 1848, when the war with Mexico ended, more than 500,000 square miles of former Mexican land became part of the United States; these included California, which had applied for annexation as a free state in the same year. By this time, the issue of the organization of the new territories as either free or slave states had provoked a major institutional and political crisis. In 1850, Whig Senator Henry

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Clay proposed a compromise according to which California would be admitted as a free state and slavery would be abolished in the District of Columbia; on the other hand, the Mexican land would be organized as the territories of New Mexico and Utah with no mention of slavery, while the federal government would be responsible for returning fugitive slaves to their masters under the Fugitive Slave Law. President Millard Fillmore signed the Bills that formed the Compromise of 1850 into law that summer with the approval of both northern and southern congressmen.\(^{28}\)

Although most southerners seemed satisfied with the Compromise, South Carolinians once more evinced a different attitude throughout the crisis of 1850. Having been already once on the verge of leaving the Union at the time of the Nullification controversy, South Carolinian planters and politicians were particularly sensitive about the issue of Secession. By 1840, the politics of reconciliation prevailed over the divisions between Unionists and Nullifiers and elitist nationalists looked at the possibility of leading the majority of the state citizens through a renewed struggle against the federal government; the key to reconciliation between different factions lay in South Carolinians’ commitment to the preservation of slavery and to the implementation of whatever measures were necessary to keep it.

To planters like James Henry Hammond, who had been Governor of the State between 1843 and 1847, the Wilmot Proviso was a clear indication that a northern dominated Congress soon would put an end to the slave system on which he and other planters based their profits and their way of life. Hammond was one of the leaders of the movement for “Cooperative State Secession”. This version of elitist nationalism implied that South Carolina should defend itself “not less by power of intellect than by force of arms”, the two preeminent qualities of every southern community.

gentleman. However, in order for the defense to be successful -- Hammond emphasized -- the South Carolinian elite should cooperate with the elites of the other southern states. 29 Partly as a response to the request of Cooperative State Secessionists, throughout 1850, Associations for the defense of State Rights sprang up in every district of South Carolina. The local newspaper South Carolinian commented on the phenomenon: “we believe the formation of these associations would do much to unite the people of the South”; and, in all truth, the Southern Rights Associations did a great deal in promoting the cause of Southern nationalism. 30

South Carolinian elitist nationalists rejected the Compromise of 1850. By the summer of the same year, most planters and politicians in the state were ready to secede. 31 In the Autumn of 1850, Governor Seabrook made plans for Secession together with Governor Quitman of Mississippi. The plans did not work, because Quitman had overestimated Mississippi’s revolutionary commitment. Given that the other southern states were unreliable, several South Carolinian leaders started calling for action with or without the help of the rest of the southerners. In May 1851, 450 planters and politicians met in Charleston and announced Secession; no other southern state joined in the declaration. As during the Nullification crisis,

31 Inspired by South Carolinian John C. Calhoun, who had planned an All-South Convention before his premature death, delegates of eight southern states met at Nashville, Tennessee, in June 1850, to issue an ultimatum to the North; the states representative agreed on reconvening after Congress adjourned and in settling for protection of slavery south of the 36°30’ parallel. South Carolinian radicals – such as Robert Barnwell Rhett and James Henry Hammond – left the convention convinced that southern secession, led by South Carolina, was only a matter of time; however, the second Nashville Convention, in November 1850, failed to adopt any meaningful resolution because of sharp divisions between South Carolinian secessionists and the majority of the other southern delegates who felt satisfied with the adoption of the Compromise of 1850. See Barnwell, Love of Order, 103-112, 134-135; Freehling, Road to Disunion, 481-486, 521-526; and T. N. Jennings, The Nashville Convention: Southern Movement for Unity, 1848-1851 (Memphis: University of Tennessee Press, 1980).
South Carolinians confronted the federal government alone. Planters and politicians were divided between those who wanted secession within a Confederacy of southern states, like Langdon Cheves and A. P. Butler, and those advocating Separate State Secession, like the famous fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett, the editor of the South Carolinian nationalist paper Charleston Mercury. Rhett wrote several articles in the Mercury supporting the argument for the separate secession of South Carolina; particularly interesting was an editorial in which he compared the two past “secessions” of South Carolina, in the Revolution of 1776 and in the Nullification crisis of 1832, with the present one, which, according to him, was imminent. As he explained in a speech delivered in 1850, and then reprinted in the Mercury, Rhett was convinced that South Carolina was right in seceding from the Union, since smaller states had struggled for their independence against larger states before in history and had been successful.

The idea of comparing small European states, which had retained their sovereignty for centuries, with what South Carolina might become if Secession proved successful, was very popular at the time and was the object of several orations and speeches. In 1851, William Denison Porter wrote a pamphlet that argued for Separate State Secession and, at the same time, revived the tradition of South Carolinian elitist nationalism. He compared South Carolina’s small size and successful agricultural economy with the ones of other small European states and argued for the distinctive character of the politics and culture of a possible South Carolinian republic. In the same year 1851, Nathaniel Beverly Tucker wrote to William Gillmore Simms, who was the most famous literary figure of the state and one of the most important advocates of Southern nationalism, “South Carolina

32 See Freehling, Road to Disunion, 528-533; Barnwell, Love of Order, 131-149; McCardell, The Idea of a Southern Nation, 304-306; and Edgar, South Carolina, 342-346.
alone can act, because she is the only state in which the gentleman retains his place and influence, and in which the statesman has not been degraded from his past. Tucker, a Virginian, had expressed in writing what several members of the South Carolinian elite thought: South Carolina was the only state in which the planter aristocracy continued to rule and preserve the true southern tradition in society and politics; therefore, South Carolina could stand alone as a nation, which represented in microcosm the best qualities of Southern civilization.  

However, by 1852, the movement for Separate State Secession had been defeated by the advocates of Cooperation with other southern states. The most extreme South Carolinian nationalists had become convinced that South Carolina should not secede alone, but rather lead a Confederacy of southern states in order to be stronger and have a greater chance of success in its struggle against the federal government. Even Robert Barnwell Rhett, the advocate of Separate State Secession, thought that South Carolina should take the initial step by seceding, and then the other southern states would follow and form a southern nation. Rhett had made clear his idea of elitist nationalism in an editorial in his paper, when he said that “wealth, honor, and power, and one of the most glorious destinies which ever crowned a great and happy people await the South, if she but control her own fate”. In his mind, southern nationalism was really an extension of South Carolinian nationalism, the creation and the supreme scope of gentlemen planters and politicians, who already possessed wealth, honor, and power.  

In March 1850, the father of South Carolinian nationalism, John C. Calhoun, had died. According to historian George Germany, “in mourning for Calhoun, the people of South Carolina mourned also for themselves. Their peculiar way of life ... was threatened by political trends in the North”. After Calhoun’s death, South Carolinian politics were not the same. Although he was the supreme theorist of

35 W. D. Porter, Separate State Secession, Practically Discussed in a Series of Articles published originally in the Edgefield Advertiser (Edgefield: Advertiser Officer, 1851), 8-10.
36 Nathaniel Beverly Tucker to William Gillmore Simms, 10 Nov. 1851; see also Walther, The Fire-Eaters, 43-47.
37 Charleston Mercury, 20 July 1850. See also Barnwell, Love of Order, 177-183; Freehling, Road to Disunion, 532-533; and Roberson, “The Foundations of Southern Nationalism”, 529-541.
state rights and nullification of federal laws, Calhoun had intended South Carolina elitist nationalism as an integral part of the American way of life. While defending southern rights, Calhoun had tried to preserve the Union as much as possible. The planters and politicians that took the lead in South Carolinian politics after him were far more extreme and convinced that secession was the only way their state could defend its peculiar way of life based on slavery. Three years after Calhoun’s death, an 1853 editorial on the Charleston-based Southern Quarterly Review used several ideas from his writings on the justification of the opposition of the minority to the tyranny of the majority, but concluded in a much more extremist tone than Calhoun would have used: “such is the school of politics in which Carolina is reared. An equal abhorrence of absolute monarchy, and unbridled majorities ... She would protect the citizen’s property as well as his life ... She loved the Union as well, but, more than all things, she loves liberty; the liberty to obey no human laws but those she has consented to.” This was the essence of South Carolinian elitist nationalism, but with an accent that anticipated the causes of Secession written by the Charleston convention of 1860. The “liberty to obey no human laws” led to the preservation of the privileges related to slaveholding; the defense of these privileges united the elite to the people of the state in the common aim of forming a southern nation led by South Carolina.

In fact, both the advocates of Separate State Secession, or Secessionists, and the advocates of Cooperative State Secession, or Cooperationists, shared the basic aim of preserving the social order within the borders of South Carolina through a nationalist revolution. Both argued that South Carolina’s aim was “the protection of

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slavery" as the very foundation of the southern way of life. Planters were at the forefront of both movements, since both aimed to preserve the South Carolinian slaveholding regime and minority political rule. Both movements argued for South Carolinian elitist nationalism; they differed on the best way to fulfill it. Cooperationists outnumbered Secessionists in most of the South, and by 1852 it was clear that the South Carolinian elite would not act alone without the support of elites of the other southern states. Although South Carolinian elitist nationalism was strong, planters and politicians in the state realized that the best way to achieve independence from the federal government was, indeed, to lead the formation of a southern nation. However, in 1852 the rest of the South was not yet ready for this radical step and would not be ready for nine more years. 41

As in the American South, in southern Italy events escalated to a new political crisis at mid-century that led to a substantial redefinition of the relations between regional elites and national government. After the Revolution of 1820 the Bourbon Monarchy continued its program of modernization and reform centered around the continental part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In 1824, the government started a new customs system which was based on freedom of trade between Naples and Sicily and increased the movement of goods between the two parts of the Kingdom. The system had been designed to protect Neapolitan manufactured items from foreign competition; therefore, the freedom of trade (cabotaggio) worked only from Naples to Sicily and not the other way around. The Sicilian elite regarded this decision as yet another attempt at suppressing their local autonomy and making Sicily a colony of Naples. A fierce debate on the implications of the new customs

system for Sicilian agriculture and industry raged in subsequent years and animated the pages of all the most important economic reviews in the 1830s and 1840s.\textsuperscript{42}

According to Ferdinando Malvica, a Sicilian ennobled bourgeois and editor of the prestigious \textit{Effemeridi}, the new customs system ended up reducing the island to a market for Neapolitan products. His \textit{Memoria sul cabotaggio tra Napoli e Sicilia}, published in the terrible year 1837, \textsuperscript{43} was a manifesto of Sicilian economic independence and certainly can be considered among the finest examples of elitist nationalism. In this work, Malvica tied together ideas about Sicilian autonomy and economic advancement through the development of the island’s particular agricultural products, such as wine and olive oil. The production and trade of these products was mostly in the hands of liberal nobles and ennobled bourgeois, like Malvica himself, who wanted independence from Naples in order to retain control of the Sicilian economy. Malvica was fully aware of the political implications of his positions, since he stated later on with pride: “I was the author of the \textit{Memoria} ... in which a political problem was disguised under an economic argument”. In other words, through a justification of the defense of the elite’s internal and external economic power, Malvica argued for the fulfillment of Sicilian elitist nationalist aims.\textsuperscript{44}

Throughout the 1840s, the economy of Sicily suffered a series of depressions; together with this, the new customs system that commenced in 1824 certainly contributed to the general discontent of the Sicilian elite toward the Bourbon policy. In 1848, a new Revolution shook the foundations of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Once again, Sicily was at the forefront of the revolutionary movement. Unlike what took place in 1820, in 1848 the Revolution started as a genuine popular movement caused by the appalling conditions of the peasants in the


\textsuperscript{43} In 1837 an epidemic of cholera killed 69,250 people, 30,000 of whom in Palermo, and provoked popular insurrections against the Bourbon Kingdom in several places.
countryside and involving the whole of Sicily from west to east. However, soon after its start in January, the Revolution lost most of its radical content because the heads of the popular movement called upon nobles and the bourgeoisie to participate in the constitution of the provisional governments. The first government, formed on 14 January, 1848, included the Mayor of Palermo, the two Marquis of Spedalotto and Rudini, and the Prince of Pantelleria; at its head was the most prestigious Sicilian nationalist, Ruggero Settimo, Prince of Fitalia.

Given these premises, it scarcely comes as a surprise that the revolutionary program, launched on 19 January, was “the Constitution of 1812, updated”. Landed aristocracy and landed bourgeoisie had found a common ground in the elitist nationalism expressed in the Constitution of 1812; to go back to that fundamental document and to update it meant to find the basis of a new alliance between the old and new parts of the Sicilian elite. Looking at the provisional governments that succeeded one another between 1848 and 1849, it is clear that the alliance between the landed aristocracy and the landed bourgeoisie was already a fact that needed only to be sanctioned. Together with liberal aristocrats like Ruggero Settimo, Pietro Lanza di Scordia, and Vincenzo Fardella di Torrearsa, there were bourgeois, like Pietro Riso and Niccolo Turrisi Colonna, whose families recently had been ennobled. With the consent of the revolutionary government, Pietro Riso formed a private militia, called the National Guard (Guardia nazionale), which had the specific task of “protecting the property and the people” from popular violence. Riso’s Guard immediately became the elite’s instrument of control over the peasantry and the single most important factor that prevented the Revolution from

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44 F. Malvica, Al Parlamento di Sicilia (Palermo: Lorenzo Dato, 1848), 6. For a detailed treatment of Malvica, see Fiume, La crisi sociale del 1848 in Sicilia, 15-37.
45 On popular movements in the early phases of the 1848 Revolution, see Giarrizzo, “La Sicilia dal Cinquecento all’Unità d’Italia”, 749-754; and G. Berti, I democratici e l’iniziativa meridionale nel Risorgimento (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962). See also three important memoirs by Sicilian democrats: P. Calvi, memorie storiche e critiche della rivoluzione siciliana del 1848 (London, 1851); G. La Farina, Storia della rivoluzione siciliana (Capolago, 1851); and G. La Masa, Documenti sulla rivoluzione siciliana del 1848-1849 in rapporto all’Italia (Turin, 1850).
becoming democratic; the Guard served mainly to check the peasant guerrilla cells (squadre), which had been useful to the elite as a disruptive force at the beginning the Revolution, and which later ran the risk of threatening the social order based on private property with their radicalism. The Guard was the living emblem of the alliance between the old and the new Sicilian elite in the common aim of keeping their power as landowners. Sicilian elitist nationalism was based on the preservation of the island’s social inequalities and the National Guard was the armed force through which keeping law and order was maintained among the lower classes. 47

When they had launched the program of “the Constitution of 1812, updated”, Sicilian elitist nationalists had in mind the formation of a Sicilian nation and the renewal of the traditional Sicilian Parliament through the constitution of an upper and a lower house based on title and property. However, in the process of rewriting the Constitution of 1812, the bourgeois elements of the revolutionary government, who far outnumbered the aristocratic elements, succeeded in abolishing the hereditary title qualifications for the upper house in the final version of the document. The spirit of the Constitution of 1848 went in the direction of recognizing the landed bourgeoisie’s preeminent role in society. In any case, the parliament was dominated by propertied men, who belonged either to the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie, irrespective of titles. The new Constitution sanctioned in law the conservative character of the Revolution of 1848 and struck a strong alliance between the two parts of the elite, which were the only propertied classes. 48


47 On the National Guard and the alliance between landed aristocracy and bourgeoisie against the squadre, see S. F. Romano, Momenti del Risorgimento in Sicilia (Firenze: G. D’Anna, 1952), 84-87; Romeo, Il Risorgimento in Sicilia, 320-322; Cingari, “Gli ultimi Borboni”, 52-53; and Riall, Sicily and the Unification of Italy, 56-58. For a first-hand account of the National Guard’s hostility to Riso, see Calvi, Memorie storiche della Rivoluzione siciliana. On the squadre as a revolutionary force, see P. Pezzino, “La tradizione rivoluzionaria siciliana e l’invenzione della mafia”, Meridiana 7-8 (1989-1990).

48 See Romano, Momenti del Risorgimento in Sicilia, 81-84; and Cingari, “Gli ultimi Borboni”, 49-53. A particularly significant account of the Revolution and the making of the Constitution from an elitist point of view is P. Lanza di Scordia, De’ mancati accomodamenti fra la Sicilia e Ferdinando di
Even though the updating of the Constitution of 1812 contemplated the creation of an autonomous Sicilian nation, most members of the Sicilian elite had already realized after the first few months that they needed the help of other Italian states in order to engage in a successful struggle against the Bourbon Kingdom. Although there was opposition to the idea of entering an Italian federation without being guaranteed a fully autonomous status, the elite-dominated revolutionary government agreed in principle on being a free state within other free states. On March 25, 1848, Ruggero Settimo opened the first session of the Sicilian Parliament with the wish that Sicily joined the “great fate of the Italian Nation, free, independent, and unified”; on April 1, the Parliament declared that “Sicily, already free and independent, intends to enter the Italian union and federation.” 49 However, throughout the entire revolutionary period, the government’s attitude toward the issue of joining the other Italian states changed several times, following the hopes and then the disappointment in the struggle between the Piedmontese monarchy and reactionary Austria. 50

The entire trajectory of the Sicilian nationalist elite, from the dream of autonomy to the realization of the need of collaboration, can be followed in Vincenzo Fardella di Torrearsa’s 1887 volume, Ricordi sulla Rivoluzione siciliana degli anni 1848 e 1849, one of the most important memoirs of the 1848 Revolution. Fardella (1808-1889), a liberal aristocrat who took part in the revolution from the very beginning and became head of the provisional government in the months preceding its fall, wrote the most complete analysis of the events of 1848-1849 from the conservative perspective of Sicilian elitist nationalism. His main aim was to explain the reason for the failure of the revolution by blaming the democratic and radical elements of the bourgeoisie. Fardella thought that democratic bourgeois, like Pasquale Calvi,

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49 Both quotations are in Romano, Momenti del Risorgimento in Sicilia, 92.
had contributed to weakening the revolutionary government by pressing the constituent assembly to take into account the demagogic idea of the “popular sovereignty” and by stirring up the people against the elite in power.  

At the same time, Fardella wanted to make clear that the Sicilian Revolution could not succeed without the help of the other Italian states. From the initial 1848 motto “Sicily independent and Italian”, with which he identified, Fardella came to realize that the Sicilian elite’s hope of success in the Revolution lay in the close alliance with the elites of other states on the peninsula and especially with the Piedmontese monarchy, whose plans to form an Italian Kingdom worried many Sicilian nationalists. Fardella believed that the issue that needed to be addressed before entering an Italian alliance was the preservation of Sicilian political autonomy, which, after all, was the basis of Sicilian elitist nationalism as proclaimed through both the Constitution of 1812 and the Constitution of 1848. Writing in 1887, Fardella could see how the failure to address this fundamental question during the 1848 Revolution had shaped the subsequent course of events up to 1860, when Sicily managed to achieve its independence and then lost it soon after by being incorporated into an Italian nation state.

All in all, the trajectory that the most open-minded elements of the Sicilian aristocracy followed during the 1848 Revolution is remarkably similar to the one followed by the South Carolinian planters during the 1850 crisis. In both cases, the mid-nineteenth century events had the effect of forcing the landed elites to confront the contradictions regarding the issue of their national leadership in the region. Contrary to what they had expected, Sicilian aristocrats and South Carolinian planters found out that neither the population of Sicily nor the population of South Carolina agreed with their vision of national leadership. 

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51 V. Fardella di Torrearsa, Ricordi sulla Rivoluzione siciliana degli anni 1848 e 1849 (Palermo: Sellerio editore, 1988; orig. pub. 1887), 67-68; 123-130; not surprisingly, Fardella’s point of view is close to the one presented in Lanza di Scordia, De’ mancati accomodamenti fra la Sicilia e Ferdinando di Borbone.

52 See Fardella di Torrearsa, Ricordi sulla Rivoluzione, 87-88. For an interpretative synthesis of the consequences of the 1848 Revolution and the merging of Sicilian separatism into Italian nationalism, see N. Recupero, “La fine del Regno”, in Iachello, ed., I Borbone in Sicilia, 62-67.
Carolina were ready to simply passively accept their idea of “elitist nationalism”. Even more important, both elites discovered that their legitimization as ruling classes of the two soon-to-be nations, could be realized only through their alliance with external supporters.

In fact, the two things were related, since in order to both retain their power over the masses in their region and achieve the aim of nationalist independence, Sicilian aristocrats and South Carolinian planters had to accept the help of stronger and more legitimate movements for national independence. Sicilian and South Carolinian elitist nationalisms could succeed only as part of the Italian nationalist struggle against the Bourbon Kingdom and of the Confederate nationalist struggle against the Union. Therefore, the 1848 Revolution and the 1850 crisis permanently altered the original aims of achievement of regional independence of the Sicilian and South Carolinian elites, and, at the same time, gave elitist nationalism a stronger possibility of fulfillment than ever before, due to the elites' recognition of the need of external help.

*Elitist Nationalism Triumphant?*

In the United States, after the crisis of 1850-1852, relations between the South and the Federal Government rapidly deteriorated. In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, according to which the new western territories were open to the possibility of the introduction of slavery on the basis of popular sovereignty. Soon after, the territory of Kansas became a battleground between free-soilers and supporters of slavery; the “miniature” Civil War caused 200 deaths and ended only in 1857, when the majority of the population voted for free statehood. In 1856, a new political party, the Republican Party, was founded with a platform that condemned southern slavery as a “relic of barbarism” and which focused on keeping the “peculiar institution” out of the western territories. In 1857, in response to southern requests to return fugitive slave Dredd Scott to his master, Chief Justice Taney declared that blacks could not be citizens and that the Missouri Compromise
was unconstitutional because Congress had no power to exclude slavery from any territory. In 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown conducted a raid at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, hoping to raise the slave population in the South and ended up hanged; whereas northerners saw him as a martyr for the cause of anti-slavery, southerners took his attempt as the quintessential proof that they were surrounded by northern Abolitionist forces.\footnote{The best treatments of the political crisis of the 1850s are Potter, The Impending Crisis, 177-296; McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 117-201; and M. F. Holt, The Political Crisis of the 1850s (New York: Norton, 1978). On the same issues from a southern perspective, see Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism, and W. J. Cooper and T. E. Terrill, The American South: A History (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 280-328.}

Finally, in 1860, Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate opposed to slavery, was elected President. Soon after, the governors of the states of the lower South called state conventions in order to decide the course of action. On 20 December 1860, selected members of the South Carolina legislature gathered in a special convention. Dominated by fire-eaters like John Barnwell Rhett, the convention voted unanimously for the Ordinance of Secession and declared the Union dissolved on the basis of reasons outlined in an explanatory document called the Declaration of the Causes of Secession. By 1 February 1861, all the cotton states of the Deep South had seceded (see Appendix, Fig. 9) and, on 4 February, delegates of the seven states met in Montgomery, Alabama, where they formed the government of the Confederate States of America and adopted a new Constitution based on the recognition of slavery.\footnote{On Secession in the lower southern states, see McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 202-275; E. Thomas, The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865 (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1979), 67-97; R. Wooster, The Secession Conventions of the South (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); W. L. Barney, The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South (New York: Oxford}

Throughout the political crisis of the 1850s South Carolinian leaders remained ready to secede. Although the Kansas-Nebraska episode provoked very little interest among the citizens of the state, planters and politicians continued to regard the federal government with suspicion. The key issue remained the preservation of state rights against federal encroachment. By 1856 South Carolinian elitist nationalists were convinced that their state should lead the great southern revolution.
against northern aggression. In the words of W. W. Boyce from Columbia, "Our great object should be unite the Southern states in opposition to Northern aggression ... Ours has been the only state that has been prepared to resist encroachments upon our rights." 55

In 1859, on the eve of Secession, the most influential spokesman for South Carolinian elitist nationalism was Thomas Middleton Hanckel, a rice planter and author of the pamphlet Government and the Right of Revolution. Hanckel agreed with John C. Calhoun's idea of "patriarchal republicanism", according to which the government of a state should depend on a few talented gentlemen, "the wise, brave, and earnest men". He then related the rule of the chosen few in a state to the idea of national self-government defined as "the ability of the people to furnish and develop within the State, the power and authority to govern the State." Although Hanckel supported the creation of a southern nation free from "foreign interference", he felt that it was up to South Carolinians to "draw the great sword of a sovereign State, and strike for the cause of justice and self-government", leading the South in its great revolution. 56

The idea that South Carolina was at the forefront of a revolution was a recurrent theme not just in pamphlets and treaties, but also in the most widespread papers, such as the radical Charleston Mercury. The idea of the revolution reminded the people of the struggle for freedom during the Revolutionary War, in which South Carolinians had played a major role, and at the same time linked the struggle against usurpation of governmental power to the freedom of the people to choose their own institutions. 57 These were the main points which Master J. F. Marshall, a young fire-eater, touched in an article appeared on the Charleston Mercury in 1859:

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55 Quoted in Schultz, Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 98.
57 For an overview of some of the most important pamphlets and publications on South Carolina’s
We are told we are in the midst of a revolution. I glory in it. Longer submission in a State, so illustrious, in the relics of our great struggle for freedom would be infamy and disgrace to her children. It is revolution we seek ... that determined purpose of a people, who have counted the cost of the contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery ... It was revolution, in a word, which hating the cowardice of submitting to wrong, nerved our gallant ancestors never to yield until the States became free, sovereign, and independent ... Let us not confound revolution with change. He who would overthrow the government which rightfully fulfills the purpose for which it was created, is nothing less than an anarchist. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce a people to absolute submission, it then becomes their right, nay their duty, to throw off such a government, and provide new guards for their future security. Who will deny that South Carolina is in such a state of affairs?  

In this eloquent speech, Marshall summarized South Carolinian elitist nationalist ideology in its final version, a version that managed to appeal to the majority of the people of the state: if South Carolina seceded, South Carolinians would be part of a revolution for the preservation of their liberty and against the prospective of enslavement to an oppressive federal government. The powerful rhetoric that opposed liberty to slavery, which had been at the center of the process of reconciliation between Nullifiers and Unionists in the 1840s, was familiar to everybody and gave every white citizen of South Carolina a reason to fight in order to retain his privileges over enslaved blacks. However, according to Marshall, the revolution should not bring any change in the government of the state, since its officials “rightfully fulfilled their duty” as representatives of the people; in other words, Marshall described the essence of the South Carolinian planters’ idea of a conservative revolution, a revolution which would leave their privileges in the access to highest political offices of the state intact and would free them from federal encroachment in their exercise of local power over both enslaved blacks and poor whites.  

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imminent revolution in the late 1850s up to 1860, see again Roberson, “Foundations of Southern Nationalism”, 549-574.


59 On the South Carolinian planters’ conservative revolution in 1860, see Moltke-Hansen, “Protecting Interests, Maintaining Rights, Emulating Ancestors”, 181-182.
struggle to the 1776 Revolution and to its possibilities of radical change through participation of the people, and was spread through several pamphlets and speeches such as the one by Marshall. Influenced by the elitist nationalist rhetoric, by the end of 1859, the people of South Carolina were united behind their political leaders in supporting the planters’ conservative revolution against the federal government and in considering secession and war as the only means to preserve the freedom that they forefathers had fought for in the War for Independence.  

When South Carolina finally seceded in 1860, the Declaration of the Causes of Secession focused on the hostility of the northern states towards the slave system and on the right of the state to regulate its own institutions: “Those [nonslaveholding] States have assumed the right of deciding upon the propriety of our domestic institutions; and have denied the rights of property established in fifteen of the States and recognized by the Constitution”.  

These words echoed Thomas Middleton Hanckel’s ideas on the necessity of internal “power and authority to govern the State” and of external “freedom from foreign interference”, concepts which were intimately related in the minds of South Carolinian elitist nationalists. The ultimate aim of the planters’ conservative revolution was to create a political entity, a nation-state, which would protect the interests of the elite from the federal government’s interference. In this respect, South Carolinian elitist nationalism found its fulfillment only as part of the larger movement for the independence of the Southern nation; the creation of the Confederacy guaranteed at once the protection of South Carolinian planters from external intrusion and the

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60 Moltke-Hansen writes that “the leadership from these two [1776 and 1860] generations came from the same strata and, indeed, often from the same families”; consequently, it comes scarcely as a surprise that “in both cases, 1776 and 1860, and despite the passage of time and all the attendant changes, South Carolina’s planter-dominated leadership wanted to control a government which would protect, not threaten, the rights of property of freemen, and so, planter interests.” See Moltke-Hansen, Protecting Interests, Maintaining Rights, Emulating Ancestors”, 181-182.

61 “South Carolina’s Declaration of the Causes of Secession, April 26, 1860” in Davis and Mintz, eds., The Boisterous Sea of Liberty, 489.

protection of their privileges as slaveowners through the provisions set in the
Confederate Constitution. 63

As in the case of the American South, in southern Italy the mid-nineteenth century
crisis had a catastrophic effect on the relations between regional elites and national
governments creating a permanent breach which eventually brought the separation
of one from the other. After the failure of the 1848 Revolution, the Bourbon
Kingdom entered a period of deep institutional and political crisis which ultimately
resulted in its fall. The international reputation of the Kingdom had been in danger
since British Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon’s 1856 public denunciation of the
Bourbon government’s “intolerable despotism”. The crisis was also financial; the
repressive system employed by the Bourbons and the suppression of popular revolts
had directed most of the Kingdom resources into expenses related to the police, the
army, and the navy, with very little left for public works. When Ferdinand II died in
1859, his son Francis II inherited a very dangerous situation, both internally and
externally. Francis II was certainly not prepared to rule, both because of his very
young age and his weak character. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was collapsing
and a much stronger hand than his was needed in order to restore its administration
and finances. However, in a very short time international events of crucial
importance accelerated the end of the Kingdom. 64

In the same year 1859, Piedmont won a war against Austria and, in 1860, it
annexed the whole of northern and central Italy, except for Venice. The newly
formed northern Italian Kingdom menaced the Bourbons, yet Francis II failed to
take this threat properly into account. His attempts to halt the crisis of the southern
Kingdom with economic and political reforms of some significance came too late.

63 On the provisions regarding slavery in the Confederate Constitution, see Thomas, The Confederate
Nation, 63-64; Davis, “A Government of Our Own; and G. C. Rable, The Confederate Republic: A
64 On the crisis of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the period after 1848, see Spagnoletti, Storia
del Regno delle Due Sicilie, 55-70; G. Candeloro, Storia dell’Italia moderna, Vol. IV: Dalla
rivoluzione nazionale all’Unita (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964), 33-46; and H. Acton, The Last Bourbons
of Naples (1825-1860) (London: Methuen & Co., 1961) The best eye-witness account of the events,
In May 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi landed in Sicily with his “red shirts” and five months later, after a progression of incredible victories over the corrupt and inefficient Bourbon army, he entered Naples forcing Francis II to flee to Gaeta (see Appendix, Fig. 10). In October 1860, the Piedmontese army defeated the Bourbons in the last battle at Volturino and the Kingdom of northern Italy annexed the South after a series of regional plebiscites. In Sicily 432,000 votes decided to annex the island to the Italian Kingdom, which was officially proclaimed on 17 March 1861.

Throughout the 1850s, the Sicilian liberal elite confronted the problem of political repression. Many elitist nationalists went into exile and tried to coordinate a program of action against the Bourbon regime from abroad. Among the most important political leaders in exile were the Prince of Trabia and Vincenzo Fardella di Torrearsa. Both were recognized leaders of the separatist movement in Sicily and Fardella had been the head of the Sicilian Revolutionary government in the last months of 1849. Being in exile and in contact with the Piedmontese government made both men realize that the only possibility of achieving independence was by allying with the strong Piedmontese monarchy against the Bourbons. At the same time, towards the end of the 1850s, most liberal Sicilian nobles became convinced that in order to have a successful moderate revolution -- which would leave the power of the landed elite untouched -- the Sicilian aristocrats and bourgeoisie had

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66 Fardella summed up his view in his memoirs published in 1855: “Our primary concern was the independence and freedom of the island [but] ... convinced that we needed support, we looked for it in the Italian governments, and especially we would taken it from Piedmont, because it was more interested than any other in weakening the Neapolitan government.” See V. Fardella di Torrearsa, Memorie (Florence, 1855), 45.
to trust the liberal Piedmontese prime minister Camillo Cavour, since his plans for the liberation of Sicily had a moderate and counter-revolutionary content. 67

By 1859, Sicilian elitist nationalists had completed the path that brought them from fighting for an independent Sicilian nation-state to fighting for an autonomous Sicilian region within the Italian federation. Summarizing the achievements of Sicilian liberals since the failed Revolution of 1848, Raffaele De Cesare remarked:

If in 1848 the prevalent idea was the independence of the island, in 1859 the horizon was much wider. A Kingdom of Italy had been formed in the North; both Tuscany and Emilia were ruled by ... governors, who were at the orders of Victor Emmanuel; at the same time, the most influential Sicilians in exile since 1848 sent hopes and warnings from abroad. The idea of a [Italian] national monarchy and the patriotic feeling for their great homeland excited Sicilian liberals, who saw a guarantee of success in the new political conditions of Italy. The first public display of liberal support [to the Piedmontese Kingdom] occurred under the initiative of Corrado Valguarnera, Duke of Arenella and son of the Prince of Niscemi; Valguarnera formed a committee for the assistance to the wounded in the [1859] War of Independence 68

What De Cesare described was the general feeling, shared by all Sicilian elitist nationalists, that in order to reach the double objective of overthrowing the Bourbon Kingdom and of retrieving the privileges that they had lost in the local government, they had to support the national Italian cause. Elitist nationalists thought that after the victory of Piedmont and the defeat of the Bourbons, they would be in a position of bargaining the exact extent of their autonomy within the new Italian monarchy. With this thought in mind, liberal nobles and bourgeois in exile sent clear messages to their fellows in Sicily on the necessity of joining the movement for Italian national unification and started collaborating with both Piedmontese and northern democrats to bring about an organized revolt against the Bourbon monarchy. 69 It is

68 De Cesare, La fine di un Regno, 693.
69 This process is described in Romeo, Il Risorgimento in Sicilia, 346-359; Romano, Momenti del
especially significant that De Cesare cites as an example of support to the Piedmontese in the 1859 War of Independence Corrado Valguarnera, Prince of Niscemi. Valguarnera was just one of a large group of Sicilian nobles and ennobled bourgeois, among whom there were also Barons Riso and Baron Turrisi Colonna, who joined Garibaldi and his “red shirts” in 1860. The fact that Valguarnera and other members of the Sicilian ruling class were at the forefront of the revolt against the Bourbons gave elitist nationalists the possibility of controlling the degree of change in the Sicilian society and of transforming the whole movement into a conservative revolution. Much like what happened in South Carolina, elitist nationalists in Sicily masked their real aims with a rhetoric according to which the advent of the new nation would have brought with it the end of old privileges and the triumph of liberal principles in order to convince the majority of the people. However, the true nature of elitist nationalist objectives focused on the recovery of local power without further interference from a national government, whether it was Bourbon or Piedmontese.  

In preparing the background for their conservative revolution, Sicilian elitist nationalists in exile had to guard against the initiatives of both radical and moderate democrats, like Rosolino Pilo and Francesco Crispi. Both wanted to liberate Sicily by exploiting the anger and unrest among the poor peasants in the countryside. In early 1860, Democrats increased their conspiratorial activity in order to stir up the masses and start the revolution. The danger of a radical revolution had never been so close to the Sicilian elite. After a failed insurrection on 4 April 1860, on 16 May Giuseppe Garibaldi landed in Sicily, declared a dictatorship and soon after conquered the island with the help of several organized

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Corrado Valguarnera e Tomasi (1838-1903), Prince of Niscemi, was the nephew of Giulio Tomasi, Prince of Lampedusa; the two of them, who represented the younger and the older generation of Sicilian elitist nationalists inspired Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa for the characters of Tancredi and Don Fabrizio in The Leopard; for more details, see A. Vitello, I Gattopardi di Donnaugata (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1963), and Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987). On the revolutionary involvement of Corrado Valguarnera and other Sicilian nobles in 1860,
peasants guerrilla cells (*squadre*). However, both Garibaldi and his followers made clear that they were fighting for the Piedmontese King and that their intent was not a democratic revolution by executing those peasants who requested land distribution in several villages.\(^{71}\)

As soon as Garibaldi showed where he stood, the Sicilian elite was quick in allying with both the *garibaldini* and the Piedmontese in order to stop peasant unrest and prevent radical action on the part of the democrats. Although the liberal nobles and the ennobled bourgeoisie had been the most ardent supporters of Sicilian elitist nationalism, when confronted with the possibility of subversion of the social order and loss of their power, they supported the immediate annexation of the island to the newly formed Italian Kingdom. On 21 October 1860, a plebiscite in which only a small percentage of the population voted because of literacy requirements and property qualifications, sanctioned the loss of Sicilian autonomy and its transformation into an Italian province. Sicilian elitist nationalists preferred to abandon the political dream of a Sicilian independent nation in order to keep their social power as an elite.\(^{72}\)

Like South Carolinian planters, Sicilian aristocrats merged their idea of a regional nation into the larger project of super-regional national state; the larger political formations were far more effective than the small regions not only in achieving national recognition, but also in protecting the interests of the upper classes against social revolution. The price paid by the two elites for retaining their regional power was the loss of their regional nation. However, as the two examples of Garibaldi as guarantor of the social order in the name of the Piedmontese King and of the

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inclusion of the recognition of slavery in the Confederate Constitution show, the elites of South Carolina and Sicily could find no better solution for the fulfillment of their aims of national independence and preservation of their power as ruling classes.

Looking back at the history of the American South and the Italian South in the nineteenth century, it is clear that 1850 and 1848 were the defining moments of elitist nationalism in South Carolina and Sicily. The crisis of 1850 and the Revolution of 1848 signaled moments at which the nationalist tradition of the two regional elites found its most eloquent spokesmen. The two events became associated with the appearance of the most fully elaborated theories and practices of elitist nationalism and, at the same time, they clarified the limits and the possibilities of their success. Leading intellectuals such as John C. Calhoun and Robert Barnwell Rhett on the one hand, and Ferdinando Malvica and Vincenzo Fardella di Torrearsa on the other, epitomized the different positions in the South Carolinian and Sicilian debates regarding the aims of elitist nationalism that preceded and followed the critical years 1850 and 1848.

After 1850 and 1848, the South Carolinian and Sicilian elites could no longer hope to remain in power and achieve independence from the national governments without external assistance from the elites of other states. However, while South Carolinian elitist nationalism merged into the larger political movement of southern independence, Sicilian elitist nationalism eventually compromised with Piedmontese liberalism in order to achieve at least partial success. In 1861, the constitution of the Confederate States of America strengthened the power of the South Carolinian elite both within the state and against the American federal government. On the other hand, in the same year, the constitution of the Italian state left intact the power of the Sicilian elite on the island, while weakening its autonomy from the national government to an even greater extent than the Bourbon administration had done.
Conclusion

Soon after their creation, the Confederate nation and the Italian nation faced crises of legitimacy. Although different in content and themes, the two crises were related to the attempts carried on by regional propertied classes to realize their programs for the construction of an elitist nation. In order to ensure the success of their nationalist projects, the South Carolinian and Sicilian landed elites had resolved to merge their regional struggles into the larger projects of the Confederate States of America and of the Italian Kingdom. However, contrary to their expectations, rather than having their regional independence recognized, both South Carolinian planters and Sicilian noblemen suffered further blows to their nationalist aspirations from the same central governments that they had contributed to create.

The repression of regional power of the elites extended to most of the peripheral areas of the Confederacy and of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and cut deeply across the divisions between older and newer sections of the elites of the two souths. In both cases, the result was a crisis of authority of the new centralizing institutions, which the two southern elites increasingly regarded as illegitimate political creations. The Confederacy, engaged in the Civil War with the Union, did not survive the crisis and its central government collapsed, leaving behind the relics of planters’ power in a defeated nation, whose slaves had been emancipated by the victor. On the other hand, the Italian Kingdom survived the crisis through a strengthening of the government’s authoritarian character and an indiscriminate use of military force, causing the outbreak of a “civil war” fought by peasants and rebels, and leaving the southern elite with a permanent legacy of resentment against the northern ideological construction of a “southern question”.

In both cases, not only did “elitist nationalism” not reach its ultimate aim, but also its failure haunted the subsequent history of the American and the Italian nations through myths of the “lost cause” of southern independence. More importantly, the failure of elitist nationalist programs was the major cause for the two southern elites’ continuous assertion of their distinctive regional
identities for several generations after the end of the Civil War in the United States and the achievement of Unification in Italy.

The search for the roots of the regional distinctiveness of the landed elites of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno begins with their role in the development of the two areas as agricultural-exporting peripheral regions in the nineteenth-century world-economy. Up until the end of the eighteenth century, the economies of the two areas were based primarily on the production of crops -- tobacco and rice in the American South and wheat in the Italian South -- on two different, but related, types of landed estates, plantations and latifondi. As in other peripheral areas of the world-economy, in both regions agricultural production was strictly controlled by a small class of landed proprietors, American planters and southern Italian noblemen. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a series of transformations in the world-economy changed the nature of the demand for raw materials produced on the landed estates and, at the same time, prompted structural changes in the composition of the two landed elites. The ultimate result of these changes was the formation of new entrepreneurial-oriented classes of slaveowners in the American South and of landowners in southern Italy. Unlike the old aristocracies of the two regions, whose wealth was related to the production of tobacco, rice, and wheat, these new classes benefitted from the shift to cotton production in the American South, and to citrus, olive oil, and wine production in the Italian Mezzogiorno.

The cultivation of these new cash-crops went hand in hand with the spread of ideas of modernization and rationality in management, which were related to the rise of the new entrepreneurial classes. However, by basing their wealth on the production and sale of valuable crops in the world-market, both new and old sections of the two landed elites perpetuated the economic dependency of the two souths on the demand for raw materials from more industrialized countries. At the same time, they committed themselves to programs of economic development based on the primacy of agriculture, and they opposed the idea of a more diversified economy, which included the expansion of industrialization, advocated by businessmen and progressive economic reformers.
Both advocates of the primacy of agriculture and advocates of the importance of a mixed economy tried to fight economic dependency through various nationalist programs, which would have increased the distinctive economic potentials of the two regions. In fact, economic dependency was the main characteristic which set the two souths apart from the industrialized world, and it was instrumental in forming the background for the development of a distinctive regional identity of the two "dependence elites". However, the elites' regional distinctiveness based on economic reasons failed to develop into a political movement of nationalism before 1861 because of conflicting interests between supporters of the importance of agriculture and advocates of the diversification of the economy. Strictly related and equally instrumental in preventing the transformation of economic nationalism into political nationalism were the differences between elites of different regions regarding the influence and the role of the state in the economic modernization of peripheral areas. This difference was charged with consequences for the future political developments of the two souths and was at the origin of the conflict of South Carolinian and Sicilian elites against their respective national governments.

The regional distinctiveness of the two southern elites failed to develop into a political program of nationalism before 1861 for another, more important, reason: within themselves, the propertied classes of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno were deeply divided about ideological issues. On one hand, several members of the older sections of the landed elites continued to rely on patriarchalism, the dominant ideology in the eighteenth century; on the other hand, most members of the newer sections embraced the nineteenth-century paternalistic ethos and its ideology of reciprocity.

In its nineteenth-century form, patriarchalism was an adaptation of eighteenth-century aristocratic values, both within the family and in society. As in the eighteenth century, patriarchal planters and noblemen demanded obedience and respect for their authority both from their wives and children within the family and from their laborers on the landed estates. At the same time, they behaved as distant and detached heads of the households and masters. In particular, the fact that they preferred to be absentee landowners led patriarchs to leave the administration of their landed estates in the hands of overseers and stewards,
who often enforced a brutal discipline over slaves and peasants. In the long run, this created a permanent gap of communication between masters and laborers and caused a chronic problem of management of the workforce on both plantations and latifondi.

In the nineteenth century, a new paternalistic ethos emerged and started to replace the old patriarchalism among the two southern elites. The advocates of paternalism mostly belonged to the newer sections of the elites; they were typically planters in the making in the American South and ennobled bourgeois in southern Italy. These new propertied classes believed in the necessity of relations of reciprocity both within the family and in society. They had more affectionate and balanced relationships with their wives and children, and they extended the concept of reciprocity to the relations with the workforce on their estates. Consequently, according to the paternalistic ethos, the masters were not obeyed automatically by their laborers because of the respect due to their superior social standing, but rather they had the obligation to attend for the laborers’ well-being in return for the work performed for them.

Patriarchal planters and noblemen and paternalistic planters and ennobled bourgeois lived in separate worlds and enforced different rules of behavior within the family and in society. This basic difference in world-views reflected also in the difference in political opinion regarding the kind of ideology that the “national elites” of the two souths should adopt as their own. Particularly charismatic national leaders attempted to transform the patriarchal ethos and the paternalistic ethos into national political ideologies of a unified ruling class and, by doing this, they laid the foundations for the construction of an “elitist nationalism” in both souths. Both in its patriarchal and its paternalistic forms, southern “elitist nationalism” was designed to be the political expression of the elites’ distinctive regionalism. As such it was a highly exclusivist ideology, firmly grounded in the belief of the superiority of the propertied classes, the male gender, and — in the American South — the white race, over the majority of the population of the two regions.

However, the elites’ discourse of exclusivism turned out to be a double-edged sword, since it also worked in the direction of excluding from the creation of a national ruling class those sections of the elites with different ideological creeds.
The patriarchal version of "elitist nationalism", with its emphasis on eighteenth-century aristocratic values, and the paternalistic version of "elitist nationalism", with its stress on nineteenth-century contractual reciprocity, mutually excluded each other. In turn, this led to the exclusion of landed entrepreneurs from the patriarchal version of the southern nation-states, and the exclusion of landed aristocrats from the paternalistic version of the southern nation-states. Moreover, whilst patriarchalism was the political ideology of a restricted and conservative part of the landed aristocracy, paternalism was the political creed of an increasingly large new class of landed proprietors. The division between patriarchalists and paternalists conditioned the outcome of the landed elites' support for nationalist programs in both regions. At the same time, it was the main factor that prevented the transformation of the distinctive regionalism of the two southern propertied classes into a successful unifying political ideology of "elitist nationalism" in the two souths before 1861.

Unlike what happened in the larger context of the two souths, in South Carolina and Sicily, "elitist nationalism" proved successful as the political expression of the regional distinctiveness of a unified ruling class. The reasons for this are multifaceted and relate to the pattern of historical formation of the landed elites in the two regions. Both South Carolina and Sicily were relatively small and self-contained with distinctive features in their social structures that set them apart from the rest of the souths. Their elites had particularly strong regional identities due to the development of the two regions as "insular societies", or societies with a low degree of exchange with the external world and a high degree of internal consistency. Due to this relative isolation, through a process of mingling between older and newer sections, the two elites grew increasingly homogenous and were able to overcome the ideological differences that had been instrumental in dividing the southern ruling classes of the American South and of the Italian Mezzogiorno.

This unusual degree of mixing between older and newer sections was reflected in the process of homogenization of patriarchal and paternalistic ideology. Several old aristocrats of South Carolina and Sicily embraced the paternalistic ethos and joined with newly formed planters and ennobled bourgeois in
effectively constructing an ideology of power that justified their exploitation of the landless masses of the two regions. Together, old and new sections of the landed elites managed to establish economic and political hegemony over South Carolina and Sicily; they used their hegemonic role to guide the development of a nation-state in the two regions, and, in the process, they invented their own specific tradition of “elitist nationalism”.

The key moments in the ideological development of the two distinctive “elitist nationalisms” were the Constitution of 1808 in South Carolina and the Constitution of 1812 in Sicily. These two documents sanctioned in law the alliance between older and newer sections of the elites of the two regions and provided the background for the development and articulation of South Carolinian and Sicilian “elitist nationalisms” as the political expressions of the regional distinctiveness of the South Carolinian and Sicilian elites as opposed to the one of the elites of the two larger souths. Through the Constitutions of 1808 and 1812, the two elites managed to link permanently the idea of nationalism in their regions with the idea of a unified regional ruling class legitimately in power. Similarly to what happened in several other “invented nations” of the nineteenth century, the elites of South Carolina and Sicily managed to use their strong regional identities to enforce a program of “political engineering” according to which the resolution of their internal divisions coincided with the emergence of a long-awaited nation-state. At the same time, the advent of this new era was ephytomized in the two capitals of aristocratic life – Charleston and Palermo – by the adoption of “nationalist” architectural styles – the Greek Revival and the Neoclassic – in the palaces and villas of the wealthiest and most progressive families of the landed elites of the two regions.

The creation of an elitist nation took time and its development coincided with increasing political pressure from outside, which was instrumental in the transformation of movements for reform into a political program of “elitist nationalism”. At the same time, the integration of the ruling elites of South Carolina and Sicily occurred as a result of the culmination of the process of mingling between older and newer sections of the two elites. This process started long before 1860 and was the main factor that helped transform the ideological differences into coherent political syntheses acceptable to both
sections of the landed elites. Already at several points before 1860, the South Carolinian and Sicilian elites stood as unified ruling classes ready to assert their distinctive regional identities against the centralizing pressures of their respective national governments. In both cases, the written law of the regional Constitution, and its significance as a document sanctioning the amalgamation of old and new, was instrumental in providing the necessary background for the elite’s ultimate decision to secede -- or separate -- in order to create an “elitist nation” in 1860.

The distinctive regional tradition of South Carolinian and Sicilian “elitist nationalism” found political expression in response to specific pressures brought upon regional elites by the federal government in the United States and by the Bourbon “administrative monarchy” in southern Italy. In the United States, federal opposition to South Carolinian nationalism was linked to the general issue of the congressional dispute between a free North and a slaveholding South. In southern Italy, the suppression of Sicilian autonomy was linked to the Bourbon monarchy’s effort at provoking changes in the distribution of power between center and periphery. In both cases, the needs of a national policy of modernization increased pressures on regional ruling classes and accelerated their move towards a confrontational attitude against the national government’s intrusion in local affairs.

Through a series of major political crises, peripheral elites managed to redefine their relation with the central administration both in South Carolina and Sicily. Articulate members of the elites expressed for the first time their desire for autonomy from the two national governments during the 1832 Nullification Crisis in South Carolina and the 1820 Revolution in Sicily. However, it was the Crisis of 1850 in South Carolina and the Revolution of 1848 in Sicily that defined the possibilities and established the limits of political program of “elitist nationalism” in the two regions. The events of 1850 and 1848 convinced the ruling elites of the shortcomings of the strict regionalism that characterized their programs for national independence. Consequently, in both regions, elitist nationalists began to look for collaboration from elites outside their specific regions in their struggle against the governments’ centralizing institutions.
After 1850 and 1848, it was clear that the South Carolinian and Sicilian elites could no longer hope to remain in power and achieve independence from their national governments without external assistance from the elites of other regions. However, South Carolinian "elitist nationalism" merged into the larger political movement of southern nationalism, thereby identifying the South Carolinian elite's distinctive regional tradition with the one of the southern elite as a whole. Sicilian "elitist nationalism" merged into the larger movement of Italian nationalism, thereby relinquishing all the elite's pretensions of belonging to a distinctive regional tradition, whether Sicilian or southern. In 1861, the formation of the Confederate States of America strengthened the power of the South Carolinian regional elite both within the state and against the American federal government. On the other hand, in the same year, the formation of the Kingdom of Italy left intact the power of the Sicilian regional elite on the island, but at the same time it weakened its autonomy from the national government to an even greater extent than the Bourbon administration had done.

The South Carolinian and Sicilian elites' desire to enforce their nationalist program through secession and separation caused the formation of two entirely new political formations: the Confederacy and the Italian Kingdom. The two nations born in 1861 were the result of compromises between the regional programs of South Carolinian and Sicilian elitist nationalists and the larger nationalist aspirations of the landed elites of the two souths. As such, the Confederacy and the Italian Kingdom erected their foundations on very unstable ground. In both cases, state-formation had been supported by the elites with precise understanding that the regional distinctiveness of the two souths -- and of South Carolina and Sicily in particular -- would be preserved. In both cases, the elites could consider the newly-created nation-state as a legitimate political formation only insofar as it fulfilled the promise of respect of regional autonomy. However, in both cases, the promise was betrayed soon after the creation of the new nation. This was the main reason why both the Confederacy and the Italian Kingdom faced a crisis of legitimacy, a crisis that brought the former to an end and the latter to the verge of collapse.
In the American South, the protection of the elites' regional autonomy was embodied in the very political ideology that justified the existence of the Confederacy: the doctrine of State Rights. Secession had begun as an “elitist nationalist” movement in South Carolina and spread to the elites of the rest of the South as a means to preserve the political power they enjoyed within their respective states. State rights owed much to the “elitist nationalist” thought of South Carolinian John C. Calhoun, but in its ultimate form it became a collective political justification of the way of life of southern regional elites, a way of life based on the legal defense of the privileges of planters over their racially exploited slaves and over yeomen and poor whites. ¹ In this respect, the doctrine of state rights, in the form in which it was understood as the basis of the Confederate government, was the ultimate transformation of “elitist nationalism” into a unifying political ideology of the whole southern elite; as such, it was intimately linked to the paternalistic ethos and to its specific ideological justification of slavery. As Drew Faust has demonstrated, the Confederate ideology of slavery, as it was represented and celebrated in literature, art, and religious speeches, had its deepest foundations in the idea of a hierarchical nation in which the planter elite exercised a benevolent paternalism over its subjects. At the heyday of Confederate power, the “proslavery argument” reached its zenith in speeches and pamphlets and served to justify the existence of a nation in which paternalistic slavery functioned as the “cornerstone” — in the words of Confederate Secretary of State Alexander Stephens — of the entire social system. At the same time the justification of the existence of slavery was the fundamental idea which distinguished the Constitution of the Confederate States of America from the Constitution of the United States and the main characteristic that was acknowledged to set the two nations apart. ²

Thus, the entire existence of the Confederate nation as a legitimate political formation was based on the protection of the elites’ regional power through the doctrine of state rights and the justification of the perpetuation of paternalistic slavery. When the Confederate government, hard-pressed by wartime needs, was forced first to violate the fundamental tenets of state rights, and then to consider, as ultimate resource, the abolition of slavery, it lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the regional planter elites. According to Emory Thomas, the sacrifice of state rights policy and the embrace of centralized nationalism brought by the Davis administration attempt to cope with total war, revolutionized the South, emphasizing manufacturing and urbanization over plantation agriculture, offering new avenues of expression to common southerners over the planter aristocracy and to women over the overarching power of patriarchy. State rights received further blows with the adoption of military conscription, the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and the authorized impressment of commodities and slaves.

The main agents of Confederate centralization at the regional level were the state governors. In several states, the governors and the executive councils of the state legislatures were in conflict because the latter protested over several Confederate policies which they considered tyrannical. In South Carolina, as early as 14 December 1861, the Secession Convention created an executive council according to which the power of the governor should have been balanced by three members of the convention. However, from the outset, the Executive Council enjoyed virtually unlimited powers and implemented measures, such as conscription and slave impressment, which were criticized by South Carolinians as “odious despotism”. Soon the South Carolinian elite, and

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even more so the whole white population of the state, came to see the Executive Council as the local representative of Jefferson Davis’ policy of Confederate centralization against the “elitist nationalist” struggle for the preservation of state rights. As the war progressed, conscription brought an increasing number of white South Carolinians to the front and away from plantations. At the same time, the consequences of Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation — which nominally freed slaves in Confederate territory — and the increasing number of runaways to Union lines brought disruption to the plantation economy and eventually threatened the entire southern way of life. Even before Sherman’s Union troops ravaged the state, the entire slavery system in South Carolina was in ruins, as was the power of the regional planter class. A similar experience was common to all the elites of the states in the Confederacy and contributed decisively to the disaffection and revolt of the southern elites against the very political formation they had created in order to defend their regional distinctiveness and power over men and property.

By 1863, the Confederate Nation was facing a deep crisis of legitimacy. Having embarked in a war, which, even though ill-equipped, she was fighting for her own survival, the Confederacy was rapidly losing ground; three years of war with the Union had forced the Confederate Government to impose enormous fiscal pressure and the restriction of civil liberties upon the southern states. As the war came close to its conclusion, it was clear that its outcome would be the defeat of the Confederacy; the last two years of war, 1864 and 1865, saw increasing disaffection and rebellion of both planters and yeomen against a state whose political elite was divided within itself and had proven

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8 According to William Freehling, “something like 600,000 slaves, or approximately 17 percent of the Confederacy total, ran off to Union lines”; see Freehling, “The Divided South”, 237.
unfit to guide the South in the difficult transition toward the achievement of modern nationhood.  

The Confederate Congress’ March 1865 decision to emancipate and arm the slaves, coming over two years after Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, signaled the complete failure of the Confederate government to protect the very basis of power of the elite that constituted the social backbone of the new nation. With the fall of Confederate policy on its own contradictions, the political program of “elitist nationalism” waned and faded away both in South Carolina and in the South as a whole. In its post Civil War transformation “elitist nationalism” meant no more than the preservation of the social and economic power of the planter elite over freed slaves, yeomen, and poor whites, within the context of unified national American politics.

The project of building a unified national Italian state saw its completion in 1861, with the annexation of the Southern territories to the newly-formed Italian kingdom. This had been possible because of the consensus of the liberal part of the southern elites over the Piedmontese solution to the problem of Italian Unification. According to this program, the compromise between liberal demands and absolutist administration, which had made the Piedmontese elite stronger than any other in Italy, would be the guiding principle behind the construction of the Italian nation. The landed elite of the Mezzogiorno, and the Sicilian aristocracy in particular, would preserve their influence and prestige insofar as they recognized the Italian Kingdom as the new legitimate political formation. This is the reason why, in the words of Francesco Paolo Castiglione, “a decisive attitude toward Unification was expressed, in all the southern regions, by the urban bourgeoisie [and] by the large landed proprietors.”

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1861, when plebiscites were held in southern Italy to decide the political annexation to the Italian Kingdom, the result, strongly influenced by local elites, was overwhelmingly in favour of it. 13 Therefore, the assurance of the preservation of the power of regional elites within the newly-formed Kingdom of Italy was the main reason why the Piedmontese administration would have a chance of building a strong consensus around its nationalist program in the South; this, in turn, would prevent the Piedmontese government from experiencing the same kind of failure that the Bourbon "administrative monarchy" had experienced in its attempts at enforcing administrative centralization and bureaucratic modernization over peripheral areas of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. 14

Unfortunately, almost from the outset, the newly-formed Kingdom of Italy and its administration came to be regarded by both landed elites and masses in the South as equally oppressive institutions as the former Bourbon monarchy. Unable to cope with continuous social unrest and increasing political extremism, the right-wing governments that succeeded one another to guide the nation through the 1860s increasingly turned to authoritarian and repressive measures in the South. Resentment accumulated against the attempts at enforcing administrative uniformity through the adoption of Piedmontese institutions -- such as bureaucracy and army -- throughout the Italian Kingdom. Contrary to the expectations, the new administration showed very little respect or understanding for the distinctive regionalism that characterized the southern Italian elite and the southern masses. Similar to what had happened at the time of the Bourbon kings, attempts at enforcing modernization from above, especially through the much-needed agrarian reform, contributed in a major way at alienating the support of regional southern elites from the national government. At the same time, the increasing tax burden on food and brutally enforced military conscription were among the main causes behind the almost endemic revolts of the southern people against central authority. 15 Soon after

15 On the continuity of administrative problems between Bourbon and Piedmontese
the annexation, the *Mezzogiorno* was devastated by a “civil war” in which advocates of the return of the Bourbon King Francis II and peasants who had been betrayed by the new administration’s promise of land distribution fought against the Italian government. After five years (1861-1865) during which the Piedmontese army imposed martial law, burnt villages to the ground in several areas, and caused more than 5,000 deaths among the southern civilian population, it looked as though the *Mezzogiorno* was destined to be in a permanent state of war. By 1866, people disappointed with the new government and the sections of the elite who still supported the Bourbon King found common ground in considering the Italian nation-state as an oppressive institution ruled by a clique which included opportunist and ruthless northern businessmen and reactionary southern landowners. The “Southern Question” was born.16

The Italian kingdom’s betrayal of its promise to respect regional distinctiveness and the enforcement of administrative centralization assumed a particularly important connotation in the eyes of Sicilian “elitist nationalists”. Their entire struggle had been conducted in order to preserve the elites’ power on the island against Bourbon pretensions and their idea of Italian nation was of one that left large margins of autonomy, if not of self-government, to its regions. Throughout 1860, the Piedmontese prime minister Cavour had reassured the Sicilian elite that the island would keep its traditional autonomy within the Italian Kingdom. Even at the time of the plebiscite which decided Sicily’s annexation on 21 October 1860, the hopes of Sicilian elitist nationalists in regard to the new government’s respect of Sicilian regional distinctiveness were high. Two days before the date of the plebiscite, a governmental committee,


whose 37 members included some of the leaders of the past revolutions against the Bourbon regime, gathered in order to write a plan for the preservation of Sicilian autonomy through the adoption of a special set of laws (*Statuto siciliano di autonomia*). However, the plan was forgotten soon after the positive response of the plebiscite to Sicilian annexation to Piedmont. Effectively, from October 1860, Sicily was governed by a *luogotenente generale*, an officer appointed by Turin, and its administration and laws were made uniform to the Piedmontese ones.

After the death of Cavour in early 1861, the Sicilian elite lost every hope of being treated by the Italian Kingdom with particular respect for its regional distinctiveness. At the same time, between 1862 and 1866, the enforced “Piedmontesization” of the region, which brought harsher taxes, conscription, and military repression to the island, caused the spread of crime, violent resistance to governmental authority and open insurrection among the masses. Following a series of minor revolts, in September 1866, the city of Palermo and the western part of Sicily revolted once again against a repressive centralizing institution. As in 1820, 1848, and 1860, elitist nationalists managed to control the revolt from the start by creating a revolutionary committee filled with members of the aristocracy and the landed bourgeoisie, and by reconstituting the National Guard for the protection of the propertied classes. After seeing the betrayal of their hopes of forming a Sicilian nation within the boundaries of the Italian nation-state, Sicilian elitist nationalists set to rebel against an administration which they considered as illegitimate as the previous Bourbon monarchy. On September 23rd, the Piedmontese government declared martial law in the city and province of Palermo. However, the revolt was crushed at the beginning of October by brutal repression conducted by the army, leaving a legacy of ill-will and contributing in creating a state of endemic revolt against governmental authority in the western part of Sicily. The most radical part of Sicily’s ruling class, defeated once again in its project of constructing an elitist

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19 See Riall, *Sicily and the Unification of Italy*, 198-200.
nation, continued to cultivate mild dreams of independence. However, the majority of the elite adapted to the new circumstances and accepted the consequences of Piedmontese centralization in exchange for a reduced version of the local autonomy it had longed for since the beginning of the nineteenth century.  

All in all, the experience of “elitist nationalism” in South Carolina and Sicily, and, by extension, in the two souths, seems to contradict the fundamental tenets of recent research on the causes of the nineteenth-century nationalist movements. Several recent studies relate nationalism to modernization and argue that nationalistic ideologies came into being as a result of the spread of literacy, mass participation in politics, and the general improvement to the conditions of life brought by industrialization. For example, Ernest Gellner has traced the origins of the modern nation-state in the transition from “agro-literate” societies, regulated by structure, to “industrial societies”, integrated by culture. According to this view, the need of modern industrialized societies for cultural homogeneity was instrumental in creating nationalism.  

On the other hand, both Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm have argued for a direct link between the creation of nations and the emergence of modernity in a variety of different fields. Whilst for Anderson it was the spread of “print-capitalism” that gave a vital contribution to the creation of an “imagined political community”, for Hobsbawm, the nineteenth-century nation was a “novel political creation”, related to the spread of bourgeois liberalism.  

However, the examples of the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno show that, at the periphery of the world-system, the landed elites of regions with regional traditions of power used the rhetoric of nineteenth-century nationalism in order to maintain their power over the masses. They were instrumental in

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spreading concepts related to bourgeois liberalism, but only as long as they could adapt them to their specific ideology of power. They helped the spread of modernization and the creation of an “imagined political community” only insofar as it did not conflict with their local interests; this is why they opposed industrialization and tried to enforce programs of economic nationalism that advocated the primacy of agriculture.

In South Carolina and Sicily, specific regional distinctiveness was the major factor in the creation of nationalist ideologies whose political zeniths coincided with the heyday of nineteenth-century liberal nationalism. However, far from being ideological products of modernity, South Carolinian and Sicilian “elitist nationalisms” were conservative justifications of the power of the ruling classes over the masses; South Carolinian and Sicilian elites were far more committed to the preservation of Gellner’s ‘agro-literate societies’, than to the advent of ‘industrial societies’. South Carolinian and Sicilian “elitist nationalisms” were neither products, nor reflections of major components of modernization. Rather, they were at the origins of a process of modernization of the two regions for the simple fact that they existed as nationalist ideologies in their own right. In the final analysis, although unwilling to guide their nations through social change, the elites of South Carolina and Sicily, through secession and separation, put in motion a chain of events that altered the structure of the two societies and eventually brought an end to their power.

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Fig. 1: Map of the states of the American South with the population of its major cities (source: W. J. Cooper, Jr. & T. E. Terrill, The American South: A History, New York: Mac Graw-Hill, 1996).
Fig. 2: Map of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies with its major cities (source: J. A. Davis, “Italy 1796-1870: The Age of the Risorgimento”, in G. Holmes, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of Italy, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
Fig. 3: South Carolina at the time of Nullification (source: W. W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).
Fig. 4: Map of Western and Central Sicily c. 1840 (source: L.Riall, Sicily and the Unification of Italy: Liberal Policy and Landed Power, 1859-1866, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
Fig. 5: Map of James Hamilton Couper's Hopeton plantation in 1821 (source: U. B. Phillips. Life and Labor in the Old South. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929).
Fig. 6: Map of the main building at Lucio Tasca’s Regaliali farm in 1854: numbers 3 and 4 refer to the master’s house, number 8 to the field guards’ house, and number 16 to the ploughmen’s house; the rest of the numbers refer to storage rooms and barns (source: N. Turrisi Colonna, “La fattoria Regaliali”, Annali di Agricoltura Siciliana, Palermo: Stamperia dei fratelli Pedone Lauriel, 1854).
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Fig. 7: Map of Charleston with the planters' places of residence in 1860 (source: J. Radford, "The Charleston Planters in 1860", South Carolina Historical Magazine 77, 1976).
Fig. 8: Map of Palermo in 1860 (source: L. Riall, Sicily and the Unification of Italy).
Fig. 9: The Pattern of Secession (source: W. J. Cooper, Jr. & T. E. Terrill, The American South).
Fig. 10: Italy and the events of 1859-1860 (source: L. Riall, The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society, and National Unification, London: Routledge, 1994).
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