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Gabriele B. Clemens

The Risorgimento

Italy’s Path to Modernity, 1770–1870

Translated by Kate Tranter

BÖHLAU

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Preface

This book offers an up-to-date overview of the history of the Risorgimento in Italy, (1770–1870). It not only considers standard topics of Italian political history but also socio-economic aspects and the results of recent research into Italian cultural history in the last twenty-five years. Risorgimento is the term given by historians to the period leading up to the foundation of the nation state of Italy in 1861. The name was taken from a liberal newspaper in Turin published by leading politicians associated with the 1848 revolution. Risorgimento can be translated as 'resurgence' or 'revival'. However, this title is somewhat misleading as it is not possible for a nation state to resurge or be revived if it has never previously existed. Italy's path towards becoming a modern nation state was extremely complex and was ultimately determined by shifts in power structures within Europe and processes of reform within Italy. Many books on the Risorgimento begin its history with the invasion of French troops in 1796. Here I have chosen a different time frame. Since any portrayal that begins with the Napoleonic period necessarily neglects the defining era of reform in Italy in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the first chapter here is dedicated to the final years of the *Ancien Régime*. The fall of the Papal States in 1870, when Rome was conquered and, with the exception of Trentino and Trieste, Italy's current borders were established, marks the conclusion of this Risorgimento period.

Compared to the relative lack of interest shown by German historians in what Reinhart Koselleck called the 'saddle period' (*Sattelzeit*) (1750–1850) and the subsequent decades up until the foundation of the nation state, Italian research on the history of the Risorgimento is considerably advanced. Over the last twenty-five years, it was shaped particularly by studies on cultural and discourse history which engaged with theories put forward by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric J. Hobsbawm. These theories describe the founding of the nation state as an invention of intellectual elites. A major impetus in this context was undoubtedly provided by the Italian historian, Alberto M. Banti. No other book in recent years has triggered such heated discussions on the topics of nation and national feeling in the nineteenth century amongst historians in Italy and of Italy worldwide as his book *La nazione del Risorgimento,* published in 2000. Subsequent studies have no choice but to examine and discuss its arguments. It is received with extreme scepticism on the part of those whose approach is from the angle of cultural history or more classical political history, but with enthusiasm by those who themselves experiment with 'turns', be they iconological, linguistic, spatial or any other.

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Banti set himself the task of deciphering the meaning and significance of national and patriotic vocabulary used at the time and constructed a 'canon' based on the structures and topics he had elicited. This canon was developed from samples of well-known and well-received literature as well as from historical works, political texts by the most important Italian intellectuals, historical paintings, and romantic opera.

In spite of the brilliance of individual studies, neither the reception of the contents of Banti's canon nor the power of its influence have ever been disputed – they are simply accepted unchallenged. However, it is questionable whether songs, poems, romantic tales, pictures and opera were sufficient to motivate people to fight for a nation state. How many volunteered for the struggle and which side did they fight on? Did the elite really all want the kind of nation state that finally emerged? The majority of Italians were faced with more existential problems and would hardly have been motivated to leave their house and home to fight for an abstract idea. What role was played by economic and power political motives? Who were the winners and losers in this complicated process? There was by no means a clear consensus amongst the political actors as to how the new state should be organised or even how far its geographical boundaries should extend.

The overview provided here gives a prominent voice to a group that was neglected in earlier studies, namely to those thousands of Italians who spent decades of their lives in political exile, mostly against their will. There has been sound initial research on their circumstances in exile and the reception of their European discourses in their home countries, primarily focussing on processes of historical transfer in Europe and America. When they returned to Italy, however, these exiles, mostly from aristocratic or bourgeois elites, were to occupy key positions and become active as a powerful force in the shaping of the liberal Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont and the young Kingdom of Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. The transnational political, military and cultural experience they had gained in neighbouring European countries, sometimes over decades, influenced their political activity after 1848–1849. In this study transnational and particularly European transfer processes will be considered with respect to the above phenomena, but also to other aspects of Italian political, economic and cultural history, since all the protagonists moved naturally within a wider European context.

A further problem is that current studies on the history of Italy in the long nineteenth century largely neglect economic issues. Yet Italy's path towards becoming a modern European nation state cannot be fully understood without considering economic and social aspects. On the one hand, the most important politicians were at the same time very successful aristocratic agrarian landowners. Conte Camillo Benso di Cavour, the first prime minister of the new nation state, is just one example. On the other hand, it was precisely the enormous success of agriculture that was the driving force for industrial development. In this context and in general, in spite of

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the significant role played by the aristocracy in Italy until well into the nineteenth century, not only in the economic sector, the extent of their involvement has been hitherto underestimated.

Industrialisation in the north of Europe also led to a transformation of trade flows and new developments in agriculture in the south of Italy, the Mezzogiorno. The widely differing agricultural structures inevitably had a major impact on the stratification of wealth and education. Oppressive poverty in large parts of the rural population was a major problem for the individual states as well as for the young nation state. It led to considerable national, international and global migration. The question quite naturally arises as to what effect this poverty and lack of education had on processes of political participation. The ordinary people, repeatedly invoked by Giuseppe Mazzini, in fact took precious little interest in his political ideas.

Another issue is that an enquiry into the social and institutional reasons for the underdevelopment of the south of Italy always causes controversy. Historical facts still play an important role in current debates. However, it is important to point out that the post-World War II economic miracle in Italy was based on long-term growth whose origins went back to the early nineteenth century. Finally, this analysis will also consider more recent studies that focus on transfer processes of European business in Italy.

This history of Italy on the road to modernity could hardly have been realised without the material and non-material support of the following institutions and individuals. The German Research Foundation generously supported my application for a leave of absence from teaching and thus contributed significantly to the production of this book. My heartfelt thanks go to Christof Dipper, Malte König and Jens Späth. As intelligent and astute proofreaders, they not only corrected careless errors but prevented biased interpretations on my part by their critical comments and insightful remarks. Amerigo Caruso, Silvia Cavicchioli and Marco Meriggi were always at hand with their immense knowledge of the history of the Risorgimento to give me help and advice, and I am extremely grateful to them. I would also like to thank my team at the University of Saarbrücken, first and foremost Maike Jung, Doris Kurz and Moritz Sommer. Thank you also to Kirsti Doepner from Böhlau publishers. In a fringe meeting at the German Historians' Congress in Münster she positively encouraged me to write this book, something I had been wanting to do for a long time. This book is a revised version of the original German edition entitled *Geschichte des Risorgimento* published in October 2021. Finally, I would like to thank Kate Tranter for her careful and insightful translation of my original German academic text.

Gabriele B. Clemens
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1. The *Ancien Régime*

The Risorgimento, the process whereby Italy was united as a nation state, has always had a special place in the study and writing of Italian history. But when did it begin and end as a historical period? Periodisation can help history to be understood and interpreted, but at the same time period divisions are always controversial. For the Risorgimento period there is good reason to consider the French Revolution in 1789 as its beginning, since it shook the pre-existing Italian states to the core and meant that, as a result of the hostilities, they were either wiped off the map or radically reformed. However, there is also much to be said for beginning with the *Ancien Régime* since it is not possible to understand the changes brought about by the French Revolution without some knowledge of the Italian states before 1789. For this reason, this book begins about twenty years before the revolution, around 1770.

In the early modern period, there was no Italian territorial state. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the territory had been divided up into numerous dominions. In the Middle Ages a sea of around a hundred prospering city republics had formed in the north, but in the early modern period they were no match for the powerful neighbouring states that had emerged north of the Alps and were successively conquered by French and Spanish troops. The Austrian Habsburgs eventually prevailed in northern Italy. Although the formerly powerful maritime republics of Genoa and Venice were able to hold their ground and maintain power over their cities and surroundings, by the time of the outgoing *Ancien Régime*, they had long lost their role as global players. All that was left to the Venetian Republic was Corfu, the Ionian Islands and Dalmatia. Genoa still ruled over the Ligurian coast but, since it was unable to effectively counteract the Corsican autonomy movement, it was forced to sell the island of Corsica to France in 1768. In central Italy, the popes ruled for more than a thousand years; in the south, it was first the Arabs, then in succession the Normans, the Staufers, the French, the Spanish Habsburgs and the Bourbons. The only area in which an Italian dynasty, the House of Savoy, was able to retain its independence and gradually expand its territory was in the north-west.

During the wars of Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and Austrian Succession (1742–1748), that is until the middle of the eighteenth century, Italy was once again the object of military campaigns and European diplomacy. These frequent changes of rule only came to an end with the Treaty of Aachen in 1748. The territorial order that it created ensured stability and offered scope for reform and was more or less endorsed at the end of the Napoleonic era by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Austria's dominant influence during the 'saddle period' (1750–1850) was

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reflected not least in its ownership of the Duchy of Lombardy, which was, like Mantua, ruled directly from Vienna. Although the Duchy of Tuscany was formally independent, it was also under Austrian control and the influence of Vienna was unmistakable. In central Italy the Papal States stretched over a wide area from Bologna to Gaeta, but after the Renaissance and the grandeur of the Baroque era, papal power had passed its peak. To the south of the Papal States was the Kingdom of Naples which ruled Sicily, the largest island in Italy, as a satellite state with its own viceroy. A branch of the Spanish Bourbons with family connections to Madrid and Vienna had been on the throne of this kingdom, known as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, since 1734. Maria Carolina (1752–1814), a daughter of Maria Theresia (1717–1780), was married to Ferdinand I (1751–1825) from the line of the Spanish Bourbons. She was a resolute queen who maintained very close relations to Vienna. Following the example of her brother, Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790), she attempted to modernise the south. In the north, the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza was also ceded to the Spanish Bourbons by the Treaty of Aachen. There, too, a daughter of the Austrian empress Maria Theresia, Maria Amalia (1756–1804), was married to the Duke of Parma. He was another Ferdinand (1751–1802), the grandson of the Spanish Queen Elizabeth (1692–1766), who for her part came from the House of Farnese, which had ruled the small dukedom before the male line became extinct. Directly adjacent was the Duchy of Modena under the Este dynasty, which worked as a kind of buffer zone between the Papal States, the Duchies of Tuscany and Lombardy, and the Republic of Venice.

The second largest island, Sardinia, previously the property of Spain and Austria, had belonged to the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont since 1720. Although Sardinia-Piedmont is often compared to Prussia because of its military tradition, its progressive administration and its gradual rise from being a small duchy in Savoy to an important influential power in northern Italy, this comparison is flawed. In contrast to Prussia, Sardinia-Piedmont was constantly threatened by France and Austria. The Savoy dynasty, ruling the Kingdom of Sardinia from its capital Turin, was the only ruling family in Italy that was in fact Italian. From the Savoyards in the extreme north to the inhabitants of Lampedusa in the south, all Italians lived under absolutist regimes, even though the Catholic Church and the aristocracy remained extremely powerful. In the last decades before the clashes with revolutionary France, however, deep-seated reforms were introduced in the majority of Italian states, and the intellectual climate derived significant inspiration from Italian Enlightenment thinkers.

After the Treaty of Aachen in 1748, attempts at reform had intensified. These years are referred to by the poet Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907) as the symbolical beginning of the spiritual Risorgimento, a century before the revolution of 1848. This nationalist interpretation, however, goes back too far. Although demands of individual patriots and intellectuals for a nation state can be found in the run-up

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to the French Revolution, both the political and intellectual elites were generally still acting in isolation and only on a regional level. This is why this book looks at the different states individually when examining the various developments up until unification, thus making it possible to outline contemporaneous developments and identify the obstacles on Italy's path to modernity.

Researchers generally agree that a central feature of late eighteenth century Italian history was that Italian Enlightenment thinkers, famous throughout Europe, were actively involved in state reforms. This is in contrast to the French Enlightenment philosophers, who were publishing at the same time but typically kept their distance from the state. At this time all the Italian regions introduced a series of anti-feudal policies, judicial, administrative and financial reforms, steps towards secularisation (except in the Papal States), humanitarian reforms and moves towards greater tolerance. Both torture and the death penalty were abolished in some areas. The theoretical basis for these measures was an interest in natural law, with its idea of a contract with the rulers that granted rights to all subjects. The great British and French Enlightenment scholars Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau were read and analysed and the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and d'Alembert was printed in Livorno with a dedication to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Yet there was a characteristic divide between those states which systematically included the best Enlightenment thinkers in their reform ideas (Lombardy, Tuscany, Naples-Sicily, Parma-Piacenza and Modena), and those which were content to rely merely on administrative reforms (Piedmont, the Papal States and the maritime republics of Venice and Genoa).

It is an undisputed fact that as a result of the reforms of Maria Theresia and her son Joseph, Habsburg-controlled Lombardy was the most progressive state in Italy. The most important administrative fiscal reforms and the establishment of the famous cadastre (real-estate register) were carried out under Maria Theresia, while basic steps towards secularisation as well as the abolition of both religious censorship and the Inquisition were introduced under the joint rule of mother and son. After 1780, Joseph, now as sole ruler, consistently pursued a reformist course by dissolving the guilds and introducing anti-feudal measures, even though this turned the rich patricians of Lombardy against him. Considerable impetus for reform came from the economist Pietro Verri (1728–1797) in Milan, where he held numerous administrative posts. The focus of his writings was on progress in trade and commerce. Although he was influenced by the Physiocrats, he attempted to reconcile free trade with progress in agriculture in his own way. He and his brother, the poet Alessandro Verri, published the short-lived, but highly respected magazine *Il Caffè* (1764–1766). Voltaire referred to the group as the *École de Milan* (the Milan school). It included the lawyer Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794), who was recognised as a radical criminal law reformer far beyond Italy. His 1764 magnum opus *Dei delitti e delle pene (On Crimes and Punishments)* was based on the philosophy of natural

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law and translated into twenty-two different languages. He argued that punishment imposed by the state should be proportionate in order to maintain order and that laws should be enforced consistently. Beccaria denounced the death penalty and also torture, which was abolished in the following year. A further forceful civil servant worthy of mention is Pompeo Neri, who established the cadastre system in Lombardy. He had previously introduced land surveys in the Duchy of Tuscany. Overall, it is striking that in both Habsburg duchies, qualified civil servants operated on the basis of their expertise. Beccaria in Milan was also responsible for the reform of criminal law.

As part of the Habsburg family corporation, the emperor's brother Leopold I (1747–1792) and his nephew Ferdinand III (1769–1824) naturally applied the same principles to reforming the Duchy of Tuscany. Here also they centralised the administration and abolished the guilds, clerical jurisdiction and the Inquisition. In addition, they introduced land reform favouring small and medium-sized landowners, had the marshes in the Maremma region drained and abolished the salt tax and local road tolls. This was opposed by the large patrician landowners, as it was in Lombardy, because they saw their influence threatened by the creation of a modern civil service and the ensuing reforms. They were, however, unable to prevent the abolition of entailment and the introduction of free trade. Due to its privileged inheritance rights, entailment had hitherto prevented the fragmentation of property while free trade undermined secure profits on the agricultural market. Nevertheless, the aristocratic elites were able to dominate both the central ministries and the provincial and local administrations, to which Leopold I had granted far-reaching administrative rights. They also used their monopoly of posts in the administration, the military and the diplomatic service as well as a dense network of patronage at court to make money for themselves.

In the years before the French Revolution, the sister of the Habsburg emperor Joseph II and of Leopold I of Tuscany, Maria Carolina, used her influence on her husband, Ferdinand, who had little interest in the affairs of government, to modernise their kingdom of Naples and Sicily with the help of leading Neapolitan Enlightenment thinkers. The policy of abolishing feudal privileges and introducing reforms began after 1770, against the opposition of the powerful *Baroni.* In the Basilicata, land reforms led to the partitioning of large estates. The power of the church was also diminished by the confiscation of monastic estates and the expulsion of the Jesuits. A supreme fiscal council, established in 1782, was to pursue financial and fiscal rationalisation, and domestic tariffs were reduced. Lord John Francis Edward Acton (1736–1811) was enlisted from Tuscany to reorganise the army and reconstruct the navy. The most influential Enlightenment thinker at court was undoubtedly Gaetano Filangieri (1757–1788), a member of the Neapolitan aristocracy who favoured a paternalistic state based on the rule of law and had published a five-volume work, *Scienza della legislazione (Science of Legislation),*

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while only in his early twenties. The first volume appeared in 1780 and the last was published posthumously in 1791. European contemporaries considered it a seminal work on constitutional philosophy. In it Filangieri also castigated feudal law and argued for a legal system based on reason. This work won international recognition and established Filangieri's fame. On his Italian journey in 1787, Johann Wolfgang Goethe sought contact with him as a leading thinker in Naples, as did Benjamin Franklin, who had read Filangieri's writings when he was the American ambassador in France and corresponded with him. He sent Filangieri as a philosopher of law his draft of the US Constitution, asking him for comment. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the more than seventy editions and translations of Filangieri's standard work made a significant contribution towards integrating the Italian debate on the end of the *Ancien Régime* into the context of European Enlightenment.

Another notable southern Italian reformer, Domenico Caracciolo dei Duchi di San Teodoro (1715–1789), shared a parallel career path with Benjamin Franklin. As diplomats, they both came into contact with Enlightenment ideas which were to influence them for the rest of their lives. The stations of Caracciolo's diplomatic career took him to Turin, London and Paris, where he met Jacques Necker (1725–1802) and Jean Baptiste d'Alembert (1717–1783). In 1781 Caracciolo was first appointed viceroy in Palermo (1780–1786), where he enthusiastically pursued Enlightenment reforms. His measures focussed on a fairer distribution of taxes and the establishment of a cadastre. Although this was prevented by the powerful feudal nobility, their privileges were nevertheless restricted. Queen Maria Carolina then summoned Caracciolo to Naples, where, under his direction, the reform process was to be accelerated.

Whereas in Naples the queen deliberately invited intellectuals from the academies and Masonic lodges to the court and entrusted them with high, administrative offices, Enlightenment thinkers in the Papal States and in the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont had to expect persecution. Nevertheless, a process of reform and modernisation began in both these states too. In the Papal States, Clement XIV (1705–1774) had succumbed to international pressure and abolished the intransigent Jesuit order. His successor, Pius VI (1717–1799), opposed any new ideas in the field of religion and philosophy, but concentrated on economic measures which were altogether comparable to those in the neighbouring states. Agriculture was to be supported by mercantile policies and a cadastre was also introduced here.

The Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont was considered a model of efficient modern administration. Reforms had begun at the beginning of the eighteenth century under Charles Emmanuel III (1701–1773). The kings in Turin were able to achieve what Louis XV and Louis XVI had attempted in neighbouring France in vain: they succeeded in opposing feudalism to some effect. Although the fiscal privileges of the nobility and the church were efficiently curbed, the alliance between the crown

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and the church and the crown and the aristocracy was closer in Piedmont than in any other of the secular states in Italy. The nobility did forfeit some of its feudal rights in the eighteenth century but continued to enjoy privileges resulting from career opportunities in the military and the administration and so grew to be an aristocracy of civil servants supportive of the state. Aristocratic families who had generally not gained their titles until the early modern period focussed their loyalty on the House of Savoy. A symbolic image of the rise of the House of Savoy was the extension of their royal palace in Turin, modelled on the magnificence of French architecture.

More recent academic studies, however, are not content with only featuring the most prominent Enlightenment scholars and their works. They also analyse the wider fields of communication, the dissemination of ideas, academic sociability, public opinion, the history of book editions and their distribution, and the history of libraries and reading. It is important to see these exceptional intellectuals within the context of their historical environment in order to gain a better understanding of the political and social climate in the decades before the revolution. They were part of a public sphere which operated transnationally across Europe, flourishing in spite of censorship and bans on public meetings.

The academies and Masonic lodges in particular were used by the elites as a place to discuss topical issues. Networks of intellectuals emerged across Europe, closer communications were established and the production of books grew exponentially. The academy movement was crucial to this process everywhere but was particularly significant in Italy because of the disproportionately higher number of academies and their older traditions. In Naples alone, a total of 197 academies can be traced between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. The figure for Rome in the same period is 185 and the situation was similar in other major Italian cities. Before 1800, nearly 2,000 academies or learned societies can be documented in approximately 350 larger towns and cities. Most of them were established in or near government seats or former capital cities: Bologna, Florence, Ferrara, Milan, Naples, Padova, Palermo, Rome, Siena, Venice and Verona. Many of these academies originated in a similar way, namely as private humanistic circles. They often began with a small group of friends who exchanged experiences, debated various issues, sought contact with like-minded people both at home and abroad and also enjoyed socialising. Some of these private initiatives were very short-lived, some developed into important academies such as those in Naples, Mantua and Padova. In this early phase, it was common to give them whimsical names, such as *Accademia degli Audaci, Accademia dei Cupi, dei Delicati, dei Depressi (Academy of the Daredevils, of the Sinister Ones, the Delicates and the Depressed).* A few of the academies which were established in this period lasted longer, such as the famous Roman *Accademia dei Lincei (Academy of the Lynxes).*

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During the eighteenth century, the number of scientific academies to be founded increased and with the introduction of rules, committees and regular meetings they developed into institutions. The royal academies in Naples (1778) and Turin (1783) were founded during this period. They belong to the type of state foundations which were spreading throughout Europe and were modelled on the Royal Society in London (1660), the *Académie royale des sciences* in Paris (1665) and the academies in Berlin (1701), Saint Petersburg (1724) and Stockholm (1739). These were prestigious institutions supported by the local rulers and, in terms of their financial resources and the reputation of their academicians, differed considerably from the older, smaller academies largely based on private initiatives. Scientific rigour was paramount. The eighteenth century also saw a surge of new agricultural academies committed to the advancement of agriculture and the protection of a rapidly growing population from failed harvests and famine. They began in 1753 with the *Accademia dei Georgofili* in Florence and one in Palermo in the same year and were to be followed by forty more agricultural societies. Agricultural issues were not, however, the only specialist focus of academies. They were joined, for example, by academies specialising in archaeological research. The king of Naples established the *Reale Accademia Ercolanese* in 1775, whose purpose was to evaluate the findings of the excavations in Herculaneum and present them to an elite European public. The results of the excavations were published by academy members in magnificent books which the king gave to diplomats to be passed on to European rulers. The most important Italian academies were in close contact with the great academies in London, Saint Petersburg, Stockholm and Paris by means of networks of correspondence and honorary memberships. In Paris the majority of the foreign correspondents in the *Académie royale des sciences* were Italians. As a result, the publications of Italian scientists were distributed more quickly and efficiently.

The Italian academies may not have been directly aimed at the common good, but they did pursue scientific and cultural interests in the same way as the French learned societies, the *sociétés savantes.* In the eighteenth century they both shared a faith in enlightenment and progress, as did the numerous Masonic lodges. Large lodges in this internationally connected Freemason movement began to be founded in the first half of the eighteenth century in Britain, France, Italy and Germany. They can be counted as among the first societies to admit people of different social status. They were meeting places for members of both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, particularly diplomats, officers, merchants, intellectuals and the occasional high-ranking cleric. After attending the mystical meetings, whose rituals were derived from the mediaeval masons' guilds and the traditions of the Knights Templar, fellow Masons met for discussion. The focus of these largely egalitarian gatherings was the ideal of a humanitarian ethic which held that sincerity, altruism, tolerance and self-criticism would lead to the perfect cultivation of the individual. In the first half of the century a wave of early lodges was founded in Naples, Florence and Venice. The

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church responded with condemnations and excommunications, and Freemasons were arrested and tortured. In the milder political climate of the last third of the century, a second surge of new lodge foundations began, including in Livorno, Turin, Genoa, Milan, Naples, and even Rome. The founding of the lodges and their activities depended heavily on diplomats, merchants and military officers with experience in Europe, as well as the many European aristocrats who had travelled to Italy on their Grand Tour. To undertake such a tour, which led first to Paris and then to Italy, was considered part of good breeding and education in high society. One purpose was for the young nobles to get to know life at the European courts and another was for them to broaden their cultural knowledge. Particularly in Italy, there was ample visual material for the wealthy elite to further their aesthetic education and understanding of art. In the evenings they were admitted to the social circles of the urban elite in the lodges and salons.

The Masonic lodges were naturally under close police scrutiny. For the rulers, the meeting of a large number of elite groups to discuss tolerance, equality, the mind and humanity was cause for alarm. Another use of the lodges was to build up political networks. The lodge *Mystérieuse*, set up in Turin in 1768, was where officers met. The crown prince, Victor Amadeus III (1726–1796), who was a member, instrumentalised the lodge as a kind of parallel court to stir up opposition against his elderly father (Charles Emmanuel III, 1701–1773) and his powerful minister Giambattista Lorenzo Bogino. In the same way as other lodges, the *Mystérieuse* became the preferred meeting place of aristocratic society, where the assembled 'brothers' could win prestige and build up networks outside their strong family structures.

The fate of Freemasonry in Naples was discussed throughout Europe, since it was there that the young queen, Maria Carolina, exploited her involvement in the lodge to free herself from the overpowering influence of her father-in-law, Charles of Spain, and his right-hand man, prime minister Marquess Bernardo Tanucci. In Vienna her father, Francis Stephen, was a committed supporter of Freemasonry and was the first ruler to belong to a lodge and entrust his sons' education to a Master of the Lodge. In the southern Italian Kingdom of Naples, however, Freemasonry was outlawed. In spite of this, in 1773, the queen assisted the imperial ambassador Josef Wilczek and Neapolitan aristocrats to found a large national lodge with the indicative name of *lo Zero (Zeal).* One of its many members was Gaetano Filangieri. When it became public two years after its foundation that young cadets from the royal regiment had joined the lodge, Charles and Tanucci exerted intense pressure on Ferdinand IV, Maria Carolina's husband, to enforce the ban on Freemasonry. Amid great publicity lodge members were arrested on Capodimonte outside the gates of Naples and put on trial, a move that reverberated throughout Europe. Members of the lodge were charged with treason, which, with a guilty verdict, could result in the death penalty. The trial developed into a tough power struggle,

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since the Freemasons were well-connected and used their international contacts to mount public protest. The trial was eventually dropped and the lodge members went free. Maria Carolina was celebrated as the heroine of the Freemasons and the raid on Capodimonte and its aftermath soon found its way into the historical memory of Enlightenment thinkers as a victory of reason over intolerance and arbitrary rule.

Supporters of the Enlightenment, however, were not restricted to the academies and lodges for the exchange of ideas. They also met in the many city salons and cafés, where they were spied on. Ideas were circulated by means of a flourishing culture of letter writing and above all by means of print media. The last third of the eighteenth century produced a huge increase in printed material. At the beginning of the century, 45,000 books were printed annually in the Italian states and by the end of the century this figure had risen to 60,000. In Naples twice as many books were available for purchase as a hundred years earlier. Whereas in other Italian cities production was frequently for the local and regional market, Venice was able to maintain its traditional reputation as the European capital of printing and between sixty and eighty per cent of its printed output was exported. As well as supplying all the Italian states, *La Serenissima* exported to Spain, southern Germany, Vienna, the Balkans and Greece. However, the era of companies owned by patricians in Venice had passed its peak and a wave of printing shops opened in the other Italian states. As in Venice, it was mostly patrician or aristocratic capital that flowed into this expanding market, which meant that the businesses were to a certain extent protected from state persecution. Apart from in Venice, the book trade was dominated by French dealers from the Dauphiné. They had representatives in the most important Italian cities and organised transnational trade in the western Mediterranean via family and kinship connections. The most popular import was French literature.

The numerous more risk-averse printers and publishers were often small businesses with one or two printing presses who were dependent on orders from the state, the aristocracy and the church. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, a new type of political printers and publishers emerged who gained more influence during the Napoleonic era. Censorship and surveillance were the order of the day and the Catholic Church regularly placed the works of French and Italian Enlightenment thinkers on the index. The greatest freedom in publishing was still enjoyed in Tuscany. However, it became clear that the circulation of books, whether permitted or not, could at best be hindered or delayed but not entirely prevented. This meant that by the end of the eighteenth century, Italian elites possessed excellently stocked libraries in which the major works of the European Enlightenment held a natural place.

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2. Italy under French rule (1789–1814)

The effects of the revolution that shook France to its core could also be felt in large parts of Italy. Especially after the summer of 1792 when the revolution became increasingly radicalised, the unfolding of events in their neighbouring country was watched by Italy's dazed rulers with increasing horror. Their reaction was to abandon their enlightened reform policies and reintroduce strict political control. The Masonic lodges, although previously supported, had to close, censorship was tightened and political suspects were more closely monitored and imprisoned. While many supporters of the revolution fled to France, Maria Carolina in Naples and Maria Amalia in Parma were forced to look on helplessly as their sister Marie Antoinette died on the scaffold. This and many other murders of French aristocrats turned them, and not only them, into bitter enemies of the revolution, bent on revenge. Added to that, in the summer of 1789, after the Storming of the Bastille and the looting of French castles in neighbouring countries, the brothers of the French king and thousands of aristocrats, officers and priests fled the country to the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont amongst other places. There in Turin, they agitated against the revolutionary government in Paris.

In contrast to the rulers, the peasant underclasses looked to France with high hopes. They wished to be able to rid themselves of the oppressive burdens of rents and taxes. Although there had been previous peasant uprisings, the abrupt abolition of feudal rights in August 1789 in Paris added fresh impetus to their demands. Revolutionary fervour spread across the border: there were mass anti-feudal protests in Piedmont in 1792 and in 1793 in distant southern Italy. The liberal achievements of the revolution were also welcomed by isolated intellectuals but the majority remained cautious. Since the enlightened elites supported the reform process, they were sceptical of the developments in France and publicly repudiated the great revolutionary events known as *Journées*, such as the Storming of the Bastille and the Women's March on Versailles, and mass protests of any kind. After the death of the king, they feared a further increase in political radicalisation, not without reason.

2.1 The politicisation of the Jacobins (1789–1796)

The number of Italian Jacobins who, as champions of a radical revolution, fought for their cause on Italian soil was relatively small. Their most famous figurehead was undoubtedly Filippo Buonarroti (1761–1837), a descendent of Michelangelo

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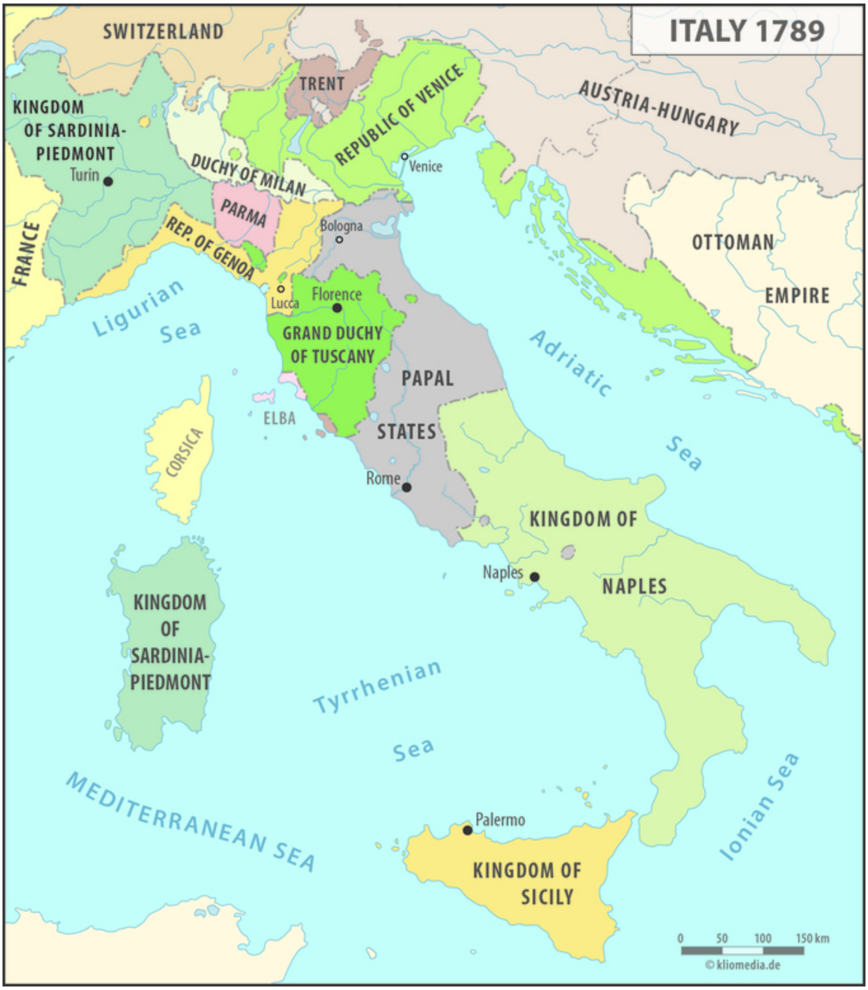
ITALY 1789
SWITZERLAND
TRENT
REPUBLIC OF VENICE
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
KINGDOM OF SARDINIA-PIEDMONT
Turin
DUCHY OF MILAN
Venice
PARMA
Bologna
REP. OF GENOA
FRANCE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Lucca
Florence
Ligurian Sea
GRAND DUCHY OF TUSCANY
PAPAL STATES
Adriatic Sea
ELBA
CORSICA
Rome
KINGDOM OF NAPLES
Naples
KINGDOM OF SARDINIA-PIEDMONT
Tyrrhenian Sea
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Palermo
KINGDOM OF SICILY
Ionian Sea
0 50 100 150 km
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Map 1 Italy 1789.

Buonarroti. He was the son of a family of Tuscan patricians with close ties to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He was made a page at court in 1773, studied law in Pisa and became an ardent advocate of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his concept of the social contract. Like other patricians, Filippo invested in the burgeoning book trade and also worked as a journalist. As a result of his dissemination of revolutionary ideas, he was under constant state surveillance, which he evaded by fleeing to Corsica in 1789. He continued to be involved in journalism there and published *L' amico della libertà italiana* and the *Journal patriotique de Corse.* It was probably his radical revolutionary views that recommended him for the post of commissioner in the district of Corte in 1792. The task of these commissioners was to monitor

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political sentiments during the radical phase of the revolution. Buonarroti acquired French citizenship and in 1793 fought against the Corsican counter-revolutionaries. As an eminent champion of Jacobin principles, he was sent back to his old homeland as a revolutionary agent. In April 1794, he was appointed commissioner of the republic of Oneglia, which he governed until 12 May 1795. This small town on the Ligurian coast had been conquered by France during the War of the First Coalition. Oneglia briefly became an experimental laboratory for Jacobin reforms and the headquarters of Italian revolutionaries. It was organised according to republican principles with collective ownership and was supported by the peasants in the surrounding countryside. After the end of the reign of terror, Buonarroti was harassed once again by the moderate directorate due to his vision of a social revolution. The principle of a combination of revolutionary patriotism, utopian communism and radical republicanism which he had propagated was no longer desirable. This small patriotic Jacobite movement was able to achieve very little during its time and in other Italian cities such as Turin, Bologna, Naples, Palermo and Rome any revolutionary stirrings were immediately supressed. However, in the long term, it had a major impact on the political discourse and political movements in the nineteenth century. These patriots, as the Italian Jacobins called themselves, were the first to articulate the demand for the peninsula to be transformed into a nation state.

The republican experiment in Oneglia was only feasible during the short phase when the French Jacobins were in power. The Italian radicals hoped to be freed from the ‘yoke of tyranny’ by further French military offensives. After the collapse of the Republic of Oneglia, Buonarroti used every means at his disposal to persuade the directorate in Paris to intervene in Italy. The continuation of hostilities that followed did in fact gradually bring the whole of Italy under French rule, with the exception of Sicily and Sardinia, which were British protectorates. In the process, soldiers and officers imported revolutionary ideas and publications. However, their promises of ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ as well as ‘war on the palaces, peace to the huts’ remained unfulfilled since, in principle, these were wars of conquest based on power strategies. They may have been followed by fundamental reforms and modernisation, but in the spirit of the liberal elites, not of the Jacobins.

The Italian rulers participated in several European coalitions against revolutionary and Napoleonic France in an attempt to protect themselves from any further expansion by their powerful neighbour. This, however, proved futile and they were unable to prevent their loss of power. The first to be affected was Piedmont, which had allied itself with Austria, Prussia and Britain in the War of the First Coalition. In 1792–1793 revolutionary troops invaded and annexed Savoy and Nice, invoking the principle of natural borders. Prussia withdrew from this First Coalition in 1795, but Britain and Austria were determined to continue the war. The Habsburgs hoped for a further expansion of their power in Italy. France responded with the

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grand war plan conceived by Lazare Carnot, who, as one of the five members of the directorate, was responsible for military affairs. The French armies were to inflict a defeat on Austria by marching on it both from the Rhine through Franconia and Bavaria and through northern Italy.

In March 1796 the command of the army in Italy was handed to Napoleon Bonaparte, at that time only twenty-seven years old. He used the opportunity to demonstrate his extraordinary tactical talent and to establish his reputation as a general. As a result of his success, he became one of the leading figures in France. The prestige he earned in these campaigns created the basis for his subsequent independent tactics – Napoleon frequently ignored directives from the government, conducted unauthorised diplomatic negotiations or prolonged hostilities without appropriate orders. As early as April 1796, King Victor Amadeus III had to accept a ceasefire which left Piedmont to Napoleon as a staging area and confirmed the surrender of Nice and Savoy. On 10 May 1796 the French defeated the Austrians completely unexpectedly in the legendary battle of Lodi. When Napoleon entered Milan, its residents hailed him as their liberator. Tuscany declared its neutrality and was initially unaffected by the war. In June 1796, the French troops advanced further south into the Papal States, also taking Emilia Romagna which belonged to the Papal States and the duchies of Parma-Piacenza and Modena. At the end of 1796, Napoleon, at the head of an exhausted army, managed to turn an impending defeat into a victory by overcoming the rearguard of the Austrian army on the bridge at Arcola. This episode was immortalised in a famous painting by Antoine Gros, whose iconic depiction contributed towards Napoleon's reputation as a brilliant strategist. By February 1797, he had defeated the Austrians at Mantua and Trento. After occupying large parts of Venice's *terra firma* in the same month, he forced the collapse of the aristocratic republic of Venice. The last doge, Ludovico Manin, had no choice but to abdicate. The Italian campaign had achieved its military aim: Austria had been driven out of Lombardy and was in a weak diplomatic position.

2.2 The era of the 'sister' republics – the *Triennio* (1797–1799)

The term *Triennio* is used by Italian historiographers to describe the years between 1797 and 1799. They were distinguished by pathbreaking liberal reforms within the judicial system and the administration and also by the costs of occupation and rises in taxes and food prices. Military conquests were consolidated by means of diplomatic treaties. In February 1797, the Pope was forced to surrender Emilia Romagna in the Treaty of Tolentino and the size of the levies it demanded, fifteen million francs, exacerbated the economic problems already existing in the Papal States. Even before this, in December 1796, local liberal patricians had founded the Cispadane Republic, made up of Reggio Emilia, Modena, Bologna and Ferrara. By

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agreeing to the Treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797, Austria sanctioned further French conquests in northern Italy, giving up Lombardy in exchange for Venice, Dalmatia and Istria. This disappointed the Jacobins, who had hoped that these areas would also become part of the new Cispadane Republic. Emperor Francis II further agreed to the mandatory transformation of the oligarchic, aristocratic Republic of Genoa into the Ligurian Republic. The Cisalpine Republic had previously come into existence in Lombardy, and after the treaty of Campo Formio, the Cispadane Republic was merged with it. A sovereign and formally independent state, this enlarged Cisalpine, with Milan as its capital, became a refuge for democrats and moderate liberals from southern and central Italy. Its 3.5 million inhabitants had previously lived in six different states, so the creation of this new state in northern Italy represented a significant step forward for the supporters of a nation state. Napoleon returned to Paris and, just ten days after the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio, was given command of the *Armée d’Angleterre* with the task of overcoming France’s strongest enemy. Since he deemed a direct attack on Britain unlikely to succeed due to the poor state of the French fleet, he concentrated on confrontations with the British over power in the Mediterranean. His aim was to fight the British in Egypt.

In Italy, meanwhile, the extent of French power continued to increase. Only two months after the Treaty of Campo Formio, there was renewed unrest in Rome. On 28 December 1797, Jacobin patriots protested outside the French embassy, the Palazzo Corsini on the Via Lungara. Papist soldiers intervened and the French embassy counsellor, General Duphot, was killed in the turmoil. This and other attempts at rebellion instigated by the patriots provided a pretext for action. Louis-Alexander Berthier (1753–1815), who had taken over supreme command of the troops from Napoleon, marched to Rome and took the city on 10 February. On 28 February 1798, the end of papal secular rule and the beginning of the Roman Republic were proclaimed on the forum, staged as a sovereign act of people. The number of people who participated in this revolutionary act is estimated at no more than between five and seven hundred. Berthier himself wrote in his private correspondence that he had seen no sign of patriotic feeling in the city, only bewilderment.[1] The pope, Pius VI (Giovanni Angelo Braschi), refused to relinquish his secular power whereupon he was arrested and deported to France, where he died on 20 August 1799 at the age of nearly eighty-two. This was the temporary end of a thousand years of papal power in Rome and the Papal States. The election of the new pope, Pius VII, had to take place in Habsburg Venice.

In Naples, the government used the apparent power vacuum after Bonaparte’s departure to begin new hostilities. Spurred on by Queen Maria Carolina and Lord Acton, Ferdinand IV ordered his troops to march northwards. When they reached Rome, they were vigorously repulsed by General Championnet who, to add insult to injury, launched a counterattack conquering southern Italy and forcing the royal

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