

Southern Italy

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Southern Italy (Italian: *L'Italia Meridionale*) or colloquially ***Il Mezzogiorno*** (Midday) is a wide geographical, historical and cultural definition, without any administrative usage, used to indicate the southern half of the Italian state, encompassing the southern section of the continental Italian Peninsula and the two major islands of Sicily and Sardinia, in addition to a large number of minor islands. It coincides with the administrative regions of Basilicata, Campania, Calabria, Apulia, Molise, Abruzzo, Sicily and finally Sardinia, that is considered as part of Southern Italy more for geographic reasons than for historical and socio-economic reasons.^{[1][2]} Some also include the most southern and eastern parts of Lazio (Sora, Cassino, Gaeta, Cittaducale and Amatrice districts) within the *Mezzogiorno*, because these territories were part, along with all the already listed ones (except Sardinia), of the historical Kingdom of Two Sicilies.

Southern Italy carries a unique legacy of peculiar nature, archeology and culture. It features many major tourist attractions, such as the Palace of Caserta, the Amalfi Coast, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other famous archaeological sites (many of which are protected by UNESCO). Southern Italy is also well known for its beautiful beaches, woodlands and mountains (preserved in several National Parks), its medieval towns, its rich cuisine and its colorful folklore. The history of Southern Italy boasts numerous kings, queens, princes, popes, writers, poets, philosophers, knights, artists, architects, craftsmen, musicians, scholars, scientists, politicians and farmers.^[3]

The Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT) uses the term Southern Italy also for identifying one of the five statistical regions in its reporting, but excluding both Sicily and Sardinia, which form a distinct statistical region denominated Insular Italy. These same subdivisions are at the bottom of the Italian First level NUTS of the European Union and the Italian constituencies for the European Parliament.

Contents

- 1 Etymology
- 2 Geography
- 3 History
 - 3.1 Prehistory and antiquity
 - 3.2 Middle Ages
 - 3.3 Early modern
 - 3.4 Late modern and contemporary
- 4 Economy
- 5 Culture
- 6 See also
- 7 References

Etymology

The term *Mezzogiorno* first came into use in the 18th century and is an Italian rendition of *meridies* (Latin for 'south', because of the sun's position at midday in the Northern Hemisphere). The term was later

popularised by Giuseppe Garibaldi and it eventually came into vogue after the Italian unification. It was sometimes associated with notions of poverty, illiteracy and crime: stereotypes of the South that often persist to this day.^[4] Sometimes it is referred to in order to generally highlight extreme disparities between regions within a country, such as between the former East and West Germany that still struggle with their "Inner reunification".

Geography

Further information: Geography of Italy

Southern Italy forms the lower "boot" of the Italian Peninsula, containing the ankle (Abruzzo, Molise, Campania and southern Lazio), the toe (Calabria), and the heel (Apulia) along with the major islands (Sicily and Sardinia). Separating the "heel" and the "boot" is the Gulf of Taranto, named after the city of Taranto, which sits at the angle between the heel and the boot itself. It is an arm of the Ionian Sea. The rest of the southern third of the Italian Peninsula is studded with smaller gulfs and inlets.



Satellite image of Southern Italy.

On the eastern coast is the Adriatic Sea, leading into the rest of the Mediterranean through the Strait of Otranto (named after the largest city on the tip of the heel). On the Adriatic, south of the "spur" of the boot, the peninsula of Monte Gargano; On the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Gulf of Salerno, the Gulf of Naples, the Gulf of Policastro and the Gulf of Gaeta are each named after a large coastal city. Along the northern coast of the Salernitan Gulf, on the south of the Sorrentine Peninsula, runs the famous Amalfi Coast. Off the tip of the peninsula is the world famous isle of Capri.

The climate is mainly Mediterranean (Köppen climate classification Csa), except at the highest elevations (Dsa, Dsb) and the semi-arid eastern stretches in Apulia, along the Ionian Sea in Calabria, and the southern stretches of Sicily (BSw). The largest city of Southern Italy is Naples, a title it has historically maintained for centuries. Bari, Taranto, Reggio Calabria, Foggia and Salerno are the next largest cities in the area. Palermo would be the second largest city if one includes Sicily as part of Southern Italy. The region is geologically very active (except Sardinia) and highly seismic: in 1980 the Campania massive earthquake killed almost 3,000 people and made 300,000 homeless.

History

See also: Magna Graecia

Prehistory and antiquity



Ever since the Greeks colonized the area, Southern Italy has, in many respects, followed a distinct history from the north. In the eighth and seventh centuries BC, for





Greek temple of Hera, Selinunte, Sicily.

various reasons, including demographic crisis (famine, overcrowding, etc.), the search for new commercial outlets and ports, and expulsion from their

homeland, Greeks began to settle in Southern Italy (Cerchiai, pp. 14–18). Also during this period, Greek colonies were established in places as widely separated as the eastern coast of the Black Sea, Eastern Libya and Massalia (Marseille). They included settlements in Sicily and the southern part of the Italian peninsula. The Romans called the area of Sicily and the heel of the boot of Italy *Magna Graecia* (Latin, "Great Greece"), since it was so densely inhabited by the Greeks. The ancient geographers differed on whether the term included Sicily or merely Apulia and Calabria — Strabo being the most prominent advocate of the wider definitions.



Ancient Greek colonies and their dialect groupings in Southern Italy.^[5]

- NW Greek
- Achaean
- Doric
- Ionian

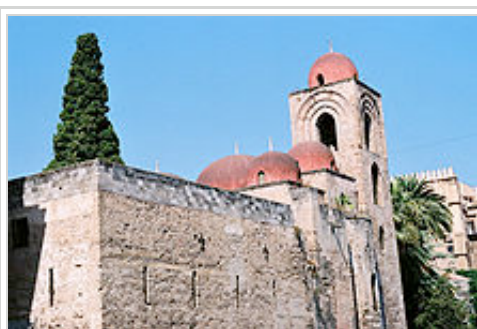
With this colonization, Greek culture was exported to Italy, in its dialects of the Ancient Greek language, its religious rites and its traditions of the independent *polis*. An original Hellenic civilization soon developed, later interacting with the native Italic and Latin civilisations. The most important cultural transplant was the Chalcidean/Cumaeian variety of the Greek alphabet, which was adopted by the Etruscans; the Old Italic alphabet subsequently evolved into the Latin alphabet, which became the most widely used alphabet in the world.

Many of the new Hellenic cities became very rich and powerful, like *Neapolis* (Νεάπολις, Naples, "New City"), *Syracuse*, *Acragas*, and *Sybaris* (Σύβαρις). Other cities in Magna Graecia included *Tarentum* (Τάρας), *Epizephyrian Locri* (Λοκροί Ἐπιζεφύριοι), *Rhegium* (Ῥήγιον), *Croton* (Κρότων), *Thurii* (Θούριοι), *Elea* (Ἑλέα), *Nola* (Νῶλα), *Ancona* (Ἀγκών), *Syessa* (Σύεσσα), *Bari* (Βάριον), and others.

After Pyrrhus of Epirus failed in his attempt to stop the spread of Roman hegemony in 282 BC, the south fell under Roman domination and remained in such a position well into the barbarian invasions (the Gladiator War is a notable suspension of imperial control). It was held by the Byzantine Empire after the fall of Rome in the West and even the Lombards failed to consolidate it, though the centre of the south was theirs from Zotto's conquest in the final quarter of the 6th century.

Middle Ages

See also: Norman Sicily, Kingdom of Sicily, and Kingdom of Naples



Saint-John of the Hermits church in

Following the Gothic War (535–554), and until the arrival of the Normans, much of Southern Italy's destiny was linked to the fortunes of the Eastern Empire, even though Byzantine domination was challenged in the 9th century by the Lombards, who annexed the area of Cosenza to their Duchy of Benevento. Consequently, the Lombard and the Byzantine areas became influenced by Eastern monasticism. Consequently, much of Southern Italy experienced a slow process of orientalised religious life (rites, cults and liturgy), which accompanied a spread of Eastern churches and

Palermo, a fine example of Arab-Norman architecture, combining Gothic walls with Islamic domes.^[6]

monasteries that preserved and transmitted the Greek and Hellenistic tradition (the Cattolica monastery in Stilo is the most representative of these Byzantine monuments). From then to the Norman conquest of the 11th century, the south of the peninsula was constantly plunged into wars between Greece, Lombardy, and the Islamic Caliphate. The latter established several Islamic states in southern Italy, such as the Emirate of Sicily and Emirate of Bari. Amalfi, an independent republic from the 7th century until 1075, and to a lesser extent Gaeta, Molfetta, and Trani, rivalled other Italian maritime republics in their domestic prosperity and maritime importance.

In the 11th century, the Normans occupied all the Lombard and Byzantine possessions in Southern Italy, ending the six centuries old presence of both powers in the peninsula, and eventually expelled the Muslims from Sicily. The Norman Kingdom of Sicily under Roger II was characterised by its well governance, multi-ethnic nature and religious tolerance. Normans, Jews, Muslim Arabs, Byzantine Greeks, Lombards and "native" Sicilians lived in relative harmony.^[7] However, the Norman domination lasted only several decades before it formally ended in 1198 with the reign of Constance of Sicily, and was replaced by that of the Swabian Hohenstaufen dynasty.

Emperor Frederick II is well remembered for its long commitment in the development of Southern Italy. In Sicily, he endorsed a deep reform of the laws culminated with the promulgation of the Constitutions of Melfi (1231, also known as *Liber Augustalis*), a collection of laws for his realm that was remarkable for its time and was a source of inspiration for a long time after.^[8] It made the Kingdom of Sicily a centralized state and established the primacy of written law. With relatively small modifications, the *Liber Augustalis* remained the basis of Sicilian law until 1819. His royal court in Palermo, from around 1220 to his death, saw the first use of a literary form of an Italo-Romance language, Sicilian, that had a significant influence on what was to become the modern Italian language. During this period, he also built the Castel del Monte, and in 1224, he founded the University of Naples, now called, after him, Università Federico II.^[9]



Castel del Monte, built by Frederick II between 1240 and 1250 in Andria, Apulia.

In 1266, conflict between the Hohenstaufen house and the Papacy led to Sicily's conquest by Charles I, Duke of Anjou. Opposition to French officialdom and taxation combined with incitement of rebellion by Aragonese and Byzantine agents led to the Sicilian Vespers insurrection and successful invasion by king Peter III of Aragon in 1282. The resulting War of the Sicilian Vespers lasted until the Peace of Caltabellotta in 1302, dividing the old Kingdom of Sicily in two. The island of Sicily, called the "Kingdom of Sicily beyond the Lighthouse" or the Kingdom of Trinacria, went to Frederick III of the house of Aragon, who had been ruling it. The peninsular territories, contemporaneously called Kingdom of Sicily, but called Kingdom of Naples by modern scholarship, went to Charles II of the House of Anjou, who had likewise been ruling it. Thus, the peace was formal recognition of an uneasy *status quo*.^[10] Despite the king of Spain were able to size both the two crowns starting from the XVI century, the administrations of the two halves of the Kingdom of Sicily remained separated until 1816, when they were reunited in the Kingdom of Two Sicilies.

Early modern

See also: Italian Wars and War of Spanish Succession



Castel Nuovo, Naples: initiated by the Anjou, it was heavily altered as it served as Spanish headquarters until 1700s.

In 1442, however, Alfonso V conquered the Kingdom of Naples and unified Sicily and Naples once again as dependencies of Aragon. At his death in 1458, the kingdom was again separated and Naples was inherited by Ferrante, Alfonso's illegitimate son. When Ferrante died in 1494, Charles VIII of France invaded Italy, using the Angevin claim to the throne of Naples, which his father had inherited on the death of King René's nephew in 1481, as a pretext, thus beginning the Italian Wars. Charles VIII expelled Alfonso II of Naples from Naples in 1495, but was soon forced to withdraw due to the support of Ferdinand II of Aragon for his cousin, Alfonso II's son Ferrantino. Ferrantino was restored to the throne, but died in 1496, and was succeeded by his uncle, Frederick IV. The French, however, did not give up their claim, and in 1501 agreed to a partition of the kingdom

with Ferdinand of Aragon, who abandoned his cousin King Frederick. The deal soon fell through, however, and Aragon and France resumed their war over the kingdom, ultimately resulting in an Aragonese victory leaving Ferdinand in control of the kingdom by 1504.

The kingdom continued to be a focus of dispute between France and Spain for the next several decades, but French efforts to gain control of it became feebler as the decades went on, and Spanish control was never genuinely endangered. The French finally abandoned their claims to the kingdom by the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559. With the Treaty of London (1557) the new client state of "Stato dei Presidi" (State of Presidi) was established and governed directly by Spain, as part of the Kingdom of Naples.



The Crown of Spain in 16th century.

After the War of the Spanish Succession in the early 18th century, possession of the kingdom again changed hands. Under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Naples and Sardinia were given to Charles VI, the Holy Roman Emperor (Sardinia was eventually ceded to the House of Savoy in 1718). He also gained control of Sicily in 1720, but Austrian rule did not last long. Both Naples and Sicily were conquered by a Spanish army during the War of the Polish Succession in 1734, and Charles, Duke of Parma, a younger son of King Philip V of Spain was installed as King of Naples and Sicily from 1735. When Charles inherited the Spanish throne from his older half-brother in 1759, he left Naples and Sicily to his younger son, Ferdinand IV. Despite the two kingdoms being in a personal union under the House of Bourbon from 1735 onwards, they remained constitutionally separated.

Late modern and contemporary

See also: Kingdom of Two Sicilies

Being a member of the House of Bourbon, King Ferdinand IV was a natural opponent of the French Revolution and Napoleon. In January 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte, in the name of the French Republic, captured Naples and proclaimed the Parthenopaeian Republic, a French client state, as successor to the kingdom. King Ferdinand fled from Naples to Sicily until June of that year. In 1806, Bonaparte, by



then French Emperor, again dethroned King Ferdinand and appointed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as King of Naples. In the Edict of Bayonne of 1808, Napoleon removed Joseph to Spain and appointed his brother-in-law, Joachim Murat, as King of the Two Sicilies, though this meant control only of the mainland portion of the kingdom.^{[11][12]} Throughout this Napoleonic interruption, King Ferdinand remained in Sicily, with Palermo as his capital.



19th century map of Southern Italy, featuring the Kingdom of Two Sicilies and the islands of Sardinia and Malta.

After Napoleon's defeat, King Ferdinand IV was restored by the Congress of Vienna of 1815 as Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies. He established a concordat with the Papal States, which previously had a claim to the land.^[13] There were several rebellions on the island of Sicily against the King Ferdinand II but the end of the kingdom was only brought about by the Expedition of the Thousand in 1860, led by Garibaldi, an icon of the Italian unification, with the support of the House of Savoy and their Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. The expedition resulted in a striking series of defeats for the Sicilian armies against the growing troops of Garibaldi. After the capture of Palermo and Sicily, he disembarked in Calabria and moved towards Naples, while in the meantime the Piedmontese also invaded the Kingdom from the Marche. The last battles fought were that of the Volturnus in 1860 and the siege of Gaeta, where King Francis II had sought shelter, hoping for French help, which never came. The last towns to resist Garibaldi's expedition were Messina (which capitulated on 13 March 1861) and Civitella del Tronto (which capitulated on 20 March 1861). The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was dissolved and annexed to the new Kingdom of Italy, founded in the same year.

The transition to a united Kingdom of Italy was not smooth for the South. The Southern economy greatly suffered after the Italian unification and the process of industrialization was interrupted. Poverty and organized crime, though were persistent problems in Southern Italy as well and it got worse after the unification. Because of this, the South experienced great economic difficulties resulting in massive emigration leading to a worldwide Southern Italian diaspora. Many natives also relocated to the industrial cities in northern Italy, such as Genoa, Milan and Turin. A relative process of industrialisation has developed in some areas of the "Mezzogiorno" after World War II. In the 1946 referendum after the war, the region voted to keep the monarchy, with its greatest support coming in Campania. Politically, it is often at odds with Northern Italy, which won the referendum to establish a republic.^[14] Today, the South remains less economically developed than the north and central regions, which enjoyed an "economic miracle" in the 1950s and 1960s and became highly industrialised. Some Southern Italian secession movements have developed, but have gained little, if any, significant influence.

Economy

Starting from the Unification of Italy in 1861-70, a wide and increasing economic divide has been noticing growing between the northern provinces and the southern half of the Italian state^[15]. In the early decades of the new kingdom, the lack of an effective land reform, heavy taxes and other economic measures imposed on the South, together with the removal of protectionist tariffs on agricultural goods in order to boost the northern industry, made the situation virtually impossible for many tenant farmers, and small business and land owners. Multitudes chose to emigrate rather than try to eke out a meager living, especially from 1892 to 1921.^[16] In addition, the surge of brigandage and mafia provoked widespread violence, corruption and illegality. Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti once conceded that places existed "where the law does not operate at all".^[17] After the rise of Benito Mussolini, the "Iron Prefect" Cesare Mori tried to defeat the already powerful criminal organizations flowering in the South with some degree of success. However,

when connections between mafia and the Fascists emerged, Mori was removed and the Fascist propaganda declared the mafia defeated^[18]. Economically, Fascist policy aimed at the creation of an Italian empire and Southern Italian ports were strategic for all commerce towards the colonies. Naples enjoyed a demographic and economic rebirth, mainly thanks to the interest of the King Victor Emmanuel III who was born there.^[19] Starting from the 1950s, the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno was set up as a huge public master plan to help industrializing the South, that aimed to do this in two ways: by land reforms creating 120,000 new small farms, and through the "Growth Pole Strategy" whereby 60% of all government investment would go to the South, thus boosting the Southern economy by attracting new capital, stimulating local firms, and providing employment. However, the objectives were largely missed, and as a result the South became increasingly subsidized and state dependent, incapable of generating private growth itself.^[20] Even at present day, huge regional disparities persist. Southern Italy continues to be poor and underdeveloped. Problems still include widespread political corruption, pervading organized crime and very high unemployment rates.^[21]

Culture

The regions of Southern Italy were exposed to some different historical influences than the rest of the peninsula, starting most notably with Greek colonisation. Greek influence in the South was dominant until Latinization was completed by the time of the Roman Principate. Greek influences returned by the late Roman Empire, especially following the reconquests of Justinian and the Byzantine Empire.

Sicily, a distinctive culture throughout the Middle Ages, was captured by Muslims and turned into an Emirate for a period, and via Sicily elements of progressive Islamic culture, architecture and science were introduced to Italy and Europe. The rest of the mainland was subject to a struggle of power among the Byzantines, Lombards, and Franks. In addition, the Venetians established outposts as trade with Byzantium and the Near East increased.

Until the Norman conquests of the 11th and 12th centuries much of the South followed Eastern rite (Greek) Christianity. The Normans who settled in Sicily and Southern Italy in the Middle Ages significantly impacted the architecture, religion and high culture of the region. Later, Southern Italy was subjected to rule by the new European nation states, first Aragon, then Spain and Austria. The Spanish had a major impact on the culture of the South, having ruled it for over three centuries.

Jewish communities lived in Sicily and Southern Italy for over 15 centuries but in 1492 the king Ferdinand II of Aragon proclaimed the Edict of expulsion. At their height, Jewish Sicilians probably constituted around one tenth of the island's population. After the Edict they partially converted to Christianity and some moved to Greece and other places in Southern Italy, Rome and Europe. In recent years, Southern Italy has experienced a revival of its traditions and music, such as Neapolitan song and the Tarantella.

See also

- Kingdom of the Two Sicilies
- Kingdom of Naples
- Kingdom of Sicily
- Crown of Aragon
- Crown of Spain

- Italian NUTS level 1 regions
 - Northwest Italy
 - Northeast Italy
 - Central Italy
 - South Italy
 - Insular Italy
- Northern Italy
- Southern Italy autonomist movements
- Napolitania

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