Proposal for the 3rd MMHN Conference

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Navigation on the Mediterranean sea. Maritime Insurance in Southern Italy (XVI – XIX Centuries)

There is little literature on the history of maritime insurance in the Kingdom of Naples. Among the most significant works on this important topic that can help us comprehend the commercial role of a Kingdom considered as a crossroads in the Mediterranean is the still valid book written by G. Cassandro 50 years ago on the origins of insurance contracts in Naples. Among the most recent works are the books on the 17th century by M. Sirago, on the 18th century by F. Assante, and the work on the anonymous companies in the first half of the 19th century by N. Ostuni, along with some indirect research carried out by scholars - G. Aliberti, J. Davis and L. De Matteo - who have closely researched the economy and more in general the business activities. The same is for Sicily, which we will not deal with specifically, limiting our research to continental Southern Italy, and on which some references, above all regarding the medieval and modern periods, are present in books by M. del Treppo, R. Lentini and A. Giuffrida, and the 19th century by Lentini and M. D’Angelo. The problems involved in researching insurance history in the Kingdom of Naples, especially when a historical economic approach is followed, such as enquiring about who represented the supply and demand of this service, the impact of the market on the people involved in this sector, the role of the State, the history of one of the insurance companies, are attributable to the difficulties of finding firsthand documentation. And the cause of lack of documentation is ascribed to the historic characteristics of this institute, left to the free market and therefore to private investors, apart from the half-century hiatus of the ‘Real Compagnia di assicurazione marittime’, whose archives, although egregiously researched by Assante, still leave ample space for more research by other scholars. My paper will not deal with the nomenclature of the insurance contract, that is the nature of the contract attributed by moralists and jurists, but it will present, first, a brief history of the institute, and then some specific cases for each of the five historical segments that can be identified in the history of maritime insurance in Southern Italy. The first segment goes from the application of the Barcellona Ordinances in the 15th century to the promulgation of the 1622 decree; the second segment regards the period between 1622 and the founding of the ‘Real Compagnia di assicurazioni marittime’ in 1751; the third covers the fifty years during which the Company operated until it closed in 1802; the fourth the period up to the Unification of Italy; and the fifth the post-unification period until the end of the 19th century.
Paola Avallone - CV.

After her high school studies, she earned her degree in Economics cum laude and her PhD in Economic History. She has received fellowships from the following organizations: Valladolid University (Spain), the International Institute of Economic History "F. Datini" – Prato (Italy) and Siena University (Italy). Since 1988, she has worked for the Italian National Research Council (Italy), first as a researcher, now as Director of Research. She is the head of the Department of Cultural Identity project “Divari di sviluppo in un’area del Mediterraneo: Il Mezzogiorno tra età moderna e contemporanea”. Most recent publications: Paper money in the Kingdom of Naples. The Neapolitan public banks between the 16th and 18th centuries (2008); Organizzazione e contabilità dei Monti di Pietà napoletani in epoca moderna (2008); Un tentativo di riforma bancaria: il Banco Nazionale delle due Sicilie (1808-1809) (2008); Trasformazioni e permanenze in campo assicurativo nel Mediterraneo: il caso del Regno di Napoli tra XVI e XIX secolo (2007). Con R. Salvemini, At the origin of microcredit. Lending to the poor in preunification Southern Italy (2007); Viaggiare per terra. Forestieri nel Regno di Napoli tra XVII-XVIII secolo (2007); Il credito su pegno nel Regno di Napoli (XVI-XIX secolo) (2007).

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