

quemáticas. Se tratan de herramientas de trabajo esenciales para el lector, puesto que lo ayudan a reflexionar y a sintetizar de forma inmediata los diversos datos presentados, principalmente, cuando el autor en tabla comparaciones y análisis de referencias numéricas (pesos, medidas, costes de transporte, por ejemplo) y jurídicas. Asimismo, es de destacar que cada artículo dispone de una bibliografía donde se encuentran discriminados los estudios, las fuentes manuscritas e impresas.

*Alice Tavares*

Daniele Palermo (a cura di), *Epidemie, Sanità e controllo dei confini* (Storia Urbana, 147), Franco Angeli, Milano, 2016, pp. 170

This volume is a collection of seven essays treating the history of public health and the control of territorial borders in different Italian states from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The publication is sensitive to contemporary events, coming at a time when strict border controls – biometric screening, medical examinations, policing and containment – have been re-established to manage the massive influxes of migrants crossing the southern European borders. The use of these public health instruments by the state to control its territorial borders is in many aspects a repetition of the old quarantine measures which were usually adopted during epidemics for the containment, isolation, physical examination, and disinfection of those crossing over

the state's territorial borders as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

As a special issue in the series of *Storia Urbana*, this volume (number 147) offers a compilation of papers which underpin a common interest in the links between early public health authorities/institutions – from the *Magistratura di Sanità* to the *Deputazione di Salute Pubblica* – and the marking and control of the territorial borders of the various Italian states: from the *Stato Pontificio* and the *Repubblica di Genova* to the *Regno di Napoli*. While each article offers a solidly researched case study of a specific city state, when taken together these make possible a comparative analysis of public health institutions, within an Italian and European-wide framework.

In this tome each contribution takes an approach which looks at sanitary institutions in their spatial-territorial, as well as their specific economic, social and political dynamics in a particular period. This spatial-historical frame squares each essay within an interdisciplinary approach, embracing theoretical and methodological insights from different disciplines, thus enabling a multifaceted historical reconstruction of public health systems. At the same time, one must observe that these seven articles also articulate an already strong tradition of Italian histories on epidemics written by C. Cipolla, P. Preto and G. Restifo among others. The present compilation builds on the latter's tradition of solid and extensive research in the archives.

Against such a historiographical backdrop, a number of important is-

sues related to the history of public health in general are dealt with in these essays as they engage with debates found in the growing literature on the subject. One principal argument which runs across a number of articles deals with the model of historical development taken by public health institutions – the *Magistrature di Sanità* or the *Deputazioni* or *Congregazioni di Sanità* – in the various Italian states, from the sixteenth to the early 1800s. Various authors point to the historical thesis on the transition of public health from ad hoc emergency set ups (usually during epidemic outbreaks) to more permanent sanitary institutions fully integrated within the state power structures. Refreshingly, authors in this volume offer a rethinking of this historical view, especially as it associates the permanence of public health institutions with state modernity. This “transition to modernity” model can be easily interpreted as being framed within the North-South model of development which relegates the Italian south as “pre-modern” and “undeveloped”. Actually, both Daniele Palermo and Idamaria Fusco’s studies in this volume illustrate how permanent state sanitary institutions were set up much later in the southern Italian cities and in Sicily, when compared to those in the centre-north of the peninsula. Yet, while acknowledging that when it comes to the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, the institutionalisation of a *Magistratura sanitaria* came later in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century – in contrast to the more ‘stable institutions’ in the *Settentrione* (in place as from the XVI century) – Daniele Paler-

mo, and other contributors, also make clear that defining the “permanence” of such public health establishments as a feature of modernity is, to say the least, very problematic.

This problem deepens when historians who regard the non-permanency of the sanitary authorities as a symptom of the pre-modern state of “backwardness” of the South, conclude that these public health entities were much less efficacious and effective in controlling the spread of epidemics. Fresh research presented in this volume clearly challenges this view. For one, Renato Sansa, honing his analysis on the papal sanitary policies of the late 1570s, immediately problematizes the direct connotations usually made, or implied, in the historical literature between: «the permanent character of the sanitary institutions and “modernity” of the state in the Public Health sector». Based on extensive research in the Vatican archives, Sansa illustrates how the *Stato Pontificio* was «not insensitive to the risks of epidemics in Rome» (p. 28). On the contrary, it sought to prevent outbreaks and to control and alleviate the transmission of disease by instituting sanitary authority, passing and implementing hygienic practices which though cannot be taken as permanent, nonetheless operated efficiently and with good measures of success. The author shows how the Papal *bandi* (regulations) of 1576 reveal “traces of modernity”, in some instances even preceding sanitary ideas and practices implemented later on by other states. In any case, the emerging knowledge – reconstructed on solid archival ev-

idence – on the results achieved in Rome as early as the 1570s by such non-permanent public health measures, give a sense of urgency to the critical re-thinking of the above mentioned historical assumptions.

One other theme of discussion is the embeddedness of public health institutions within existing power structures. The ways and means by which sanitary institutions were used as instruments of power in the Italian city states is found running in most of these contributions. In his essay dealing with the public health system in the Republic of Genoa, Danilo Pedemonte shows how sanitary institutions – more so the “permanent” ones – facilitated the consolidation of state spatial and social control, mainly by «coming to mediate between the central state and the local and peripheral realities». This study makes evident how the Genoese *Magistratura di Sanità* operated to prevent the infiltration and spread of epidemics but also to control people's movement and commercial traffic on the borders of the state. The author narrows down his analysis on the sanitary regulations which were enacted and implemented within the city, providing examples of the biopolitical techniques operated on – with the intention to manage and discipline – the urban population. Here, one cannot but observe that the interpretations of both Danilo Pedemonte and Renato Sansa immediately evoke the Foucaultian view of the public health institutions as disciplinary dispositives. Nonetheless, through evidence drawn from contemporary records, Pedemonte emphasises that in this “disciplinary

system” one starts observing “anomalies and imperfections” (p.34), which cannot but redirect one's attention onto the more nuanced social realities and incongruities – and I may add, forms of resistance – found in these state sanitary systems. This opens up a largely unexplored territory which still requires in-depth archival research and theoretical elaboration.

Moreover, other authors in this publication illustrate how public health institutions, used to protect the territorial boundaries of the state in turn created social borders which led to the definition, containment, marginalisation and stigmatization of the vulnerable poor, the destitute, the vagabonds, and minorities such as the Jews. It is agreed that the sanitary procedures instituted in the various states, were also techniques of control which defined as the (negative) “other” those on the other side of – or trying to cross – “the border”. Matteo Di Figlia, in the last essay of this volume, explains how the consolidation of the ‘natural sea-coast frontiers’ of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies in 1816-17 – mainly through sanitary quarantine procedures – defined all those who found themselves crossing the border line as “alien” and “foreigners”; to be treated as “the enemy.”

Moreover, while acknowledging the role played by these sanitary institutions/measures to protect the population from disease and to consolidate the social order, various contributors here make evident that these frequently led to unintended – indeed conflicting – consequences for the state. Raffaella Salvemini in her



paper on state sanitary policies in the Kingdom of Naples, highlights the complications which public health institutions had on the same social order and political economy which they were intended to protect, especially when sanitary measures – as quarantine – led to the disruption of food supplies. State authorities had always to keep this (and a range of other negative consequences) in mind before enacting sanitary laws and specifically when implementing port quarantine. Another author, Idamaria Fusco, similarly to Salvemini, shows how this was the case in the Kingdom of Naples first during the plague of 1656 and 1690 and secondly during the “*emergenze sanitarie*” of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She demonstrates that it was accepted that the greatest threat of epidemics came from the sea – “*la peste giunse dal mare*” – and that logically the first reaction to any news of pestilence was the immediate closure of the Kingdom’s coastal/port borders. The author argues that quarantine led to the instant disruption of the shipping/trade lifelines of the *Regno* which in turn left serious economic, political and social consequences.

In the same way as Salvemini, Palermo and Fusco, Dario Dell’Osa reveals how decisions by the health authorities to quarantine a coastal port were always “high risk”, involving severe disruptions to the movement of people and the circulation of commodities with all the negative effects this left on the social order. Authorities were therefore always cautious when deciding to apply strict quarantine, and when this was absolutely necessary they usually tailored measures

according to the specific economic, social and political circumstances at that time, rather than rigidly adopting existing quarantine models. Dell’Osa continues to provide evidence of how these public health institutions, implementing measures in flexible ways, became sites of negotiation, not only with regard to the taking of sanitary decisions but also on matters shaping the state’s relations with neighbouring cities and ports. Danilo Pedemonte reaches similar conclusions in his study on Genoa during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, showing how health institutions were consistently utilised by the authorities as instruments for the intermediation and the projection of state politics in the region.

Matteo di Figlia’s investigation of the Palermo-based *Suprema Deputazione di Salute* – which was intended to control the Sicilian coast during 1816-1830 – presents us with a “permanent” board of health riddled with internal political conflicts, whilst seeking to intermediate the state’s foreign commercial and political relations. At the same time, the author brings to our attention another important role which the quarantine-port authorities played in maintaining and extending regional-wide intelligence networks. To function properly, such a pivotal institution, and the whole sanitary system, needed to keep a constant flow of information coming their way on the spread of epidemics in the Mediterranean and beyond. It is shown how such networks facilitated public health/quarantine measures to be taken in time as well as abetting the state’s political interests in the region.

In conclusion, this volume provides stimulating analyses, and in various instances, original histories on the development of public health institutions in different Italian states from the late 1500s to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. All articles offer extensively researched archival-based case studies which add to our knowledge – and to the growing literature – on Italian, and Mediterranean-wide historiography of public health and border quarantine. Essays in this volume engage with important topics – and raise questions – which are evermore present in the history of public health. They also provide a critical re-reading of some interpretations found in Italian historiography on the subject. One should add that this compilation of articles goes deeper – and charts a wider territory – than promised by the title of the volume (epidemics, sanitary policies and the control of borders), as it presents cutting-edge research, original interpretations and approaches to the subject which I hope to have at least been able to highlight in this review.

John Chircop

~~Daniel Panzac, *La République de Venise et les Régences barbaresques au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Un exemple des relations Nord-Sud en Méditerranée occidentale*, Éditions Publisud, Paris 2015, pp. 356~~

~~Questo volume postumo di Daniel Panzac – lo storico francese del Mediterraneo ottomano scomparso nel 2012 – esce grazie all'impegno e alla~~

~~dedizione di Salvatore Speciale, che ne ha curato l'edizione e scritto la prefazione. Si tratta di un'opera imperniata sulle relazioni, dapprima amichevoli, poi conflittuali, tra la Repubblica di Venezia e la Reggenza di Tunisi negli ultimi decenni del Settecento. Come spiegato nell'introduzione, la scelta di queste due realtà statuali è dovuta al fatto che il loro peso politico-militare ed economico fosse in questo periodo analogo. Scopo ultimo dell'analisi è quello di offrire al lettore un esempio paradigmatico del più ampio e articolato quadro dei rapporti tra le potenze occidentali e le Reggenze barbaresche in quella che è stata l'epoca dei trattati, stipulati in gran numero nel corso del Settecento per cercare di frenare l'attività dei corsari barbareschi.~~

~~Il volume si apre con un rapido sguardo alla situazione politico-militare ed economica del Mediterraneo a partire dal secondo quarto del XVIII secolo. Viene sottolineato in particolare il favorevole impatto per l'economia marittima veneziana rappresentato dagli accordi siglati nel 1763 con le Reggenze barbaresche. Panzac si concentra quindi sull'episodio che nel 1781 determina la grave crisi nei rapporti tra Venezia e Tunisi e che porterà negli anni successivi ai bombardamenti navali di Sfax e Biserta. Sono ripercorse sia le vicende, di carattere essenzialmente marittimo-sanitario (una nave veneziana colpita dalla peste mentre ha a bordo mercanti turchi), che danno l'avvio al caso, sia quelle politico-diplomatiche che precedono lo scontro aperto, iniziatosi nel gennaio del 1784. Un pre-cinitare degli eventi attribuito alla~~