The age of Charles V

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El Regne de Jerusalem fou creat pels prínceps cristians en la figura de Guifré de Bouillon el 1099 al final de la Primera Croada després que s'haver-se apoderat de la ciutat. El regne fou, doncs, un dels Estats Llatins d'Orient; no sempre, però, els reis de Jerusalem posseïren la ciutat que donava nom al seu regne. La fi del regne s'esdevingué el 1291, quan els musulmans recuperaren la ciutat d'Acre, darrer baluard dels croats a Terra Santa.

The age of Charles V
Charles I, who was elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1519 upon the death of his paternal grandfather, Maximilian, aspired to universal monarchy over the far-flung territories he had inherited, from Germany, the Low Countries, Italy, and Spain to the New World. The Piedmontese humanist Mercurino de Gattinara, Charles’s chancellor from 1518 to 1530, fueled his ambitions, but the providential design for Charles to be a new Charlemagne collided with political realities. The revolt of the comuneros (1520–21), an uprising of a group of Spanish cities, was successfully quelled, securing Castile as the bedrock of his empire, but the opposition of Francis I of France, of Süleyman I (the Magnificent; ruled 1520–66) of the Ottoman Empire, and of the Lutheran princes in Germany proved more intractable.

Early success in Italy, nevertheless, provided Charles with the most important base outside Spain for exercising his power. Imperial troops forced the French to retreat from Milan and restored the Sforza in 1522. When a refitted French army of 30,000 men retook Milan in 1524, the new Medici pope, Clement VII (reigned 1523–34), changed sides to become a French ally. But, at the most important battle of the Italian wars, fought at Pavia on February 24, 1525, the French were defeated and Francis I was captured. Soon after his release, he abrogated the Treaty of Madrid (January 1526), in which he had been forced, among other concessions, to abandon his Italian claims. He headed a new anti-Spanish alliance, the Holy League of Cognac (May 1526), which united France with the papacy, Milan, Florence, and Venice. With no French forces in the field, some 12,000 of Charles’s imperial troops, largely unpaid Lutheran infantry, marched south to Rome. On May 6, 1527, they attacked and sacked the city, forcing the pope to take refuge in the Castel Sant’Angelo. The repercussions of this chastisement of the corrupt church were heard throughout Europe, and some scholars still date the end of the Renaissance in Italy to this event.

New warfare
New military technologies in siegecraft (cannon and bastion) and new techniques in open-field engagements (mixing pike and harquebus) not only transformed the nature of warfare but also threatened the order of a society still dominated by an aristocratic military caste. In the course of the Italian wars, the non-noble infantry adopted tactical innovations that unseated the cavalry of heavily armoured nobility, which had dominated medieval warfare. Charles VIII’s invading army employed the Swiss pike phalanx, whose moving squares of 6,000 men had already developed the ability to engage in offensive as well as defensive maneuvers. In the fighting against France for the Kingdom of Naples, Fernández de Córdoba first developed the Spanish tercios, more-flexible units of 3,000 infantrymen using both pikes and harquebuses. Spanish military superiority eventually owed its success to the introduction in 1521 of the musket (an improved harquebus) and to the refinement of pike and musket tactics in the years preceding the Battle of Pavia. Such tactics dominated land warfare until the Battle of Rocroi in 1643.

The new social composition of the enlarged infantry, as well as the need for large quantities of metal and the financial requirements for equipping and launching an army, pushed military affairs further into royal hands, strengthening the growing power of the central monarchy at the expense of the aristocracy. Commoners could forge a new relationship directly with royal authority. They could also, as in the case of the republics, create new images of citizenly power. In 1503 the Florentine republic, for example, planned two monumental mural paintings for the Great Council Hall of

the Palazzo Vecchio (town hall) to be executed by two of the giants of High Renaissance art, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. The former's Battle of Anghiari and the latter's Battle of Cascina, if completed, would have emphasized the strength and righteous rage of republican virtue and the necessity for citizens to be vigilant, challenging them to retake Pisa and subdue Tuscany during the republic's ongoing wars. Ludovico Ariosto, singing his epic poetry at the chivalric pro-French court of Ferrara, lamented the loss of glory, honour, valour, and courage to the "wretched and foul invention" of firearms. Even 20 years after the fact, when the diplomat and writer Baldassare Castiglione nostalgically portrayed the graceful court of Urbino of 1508 in The Courtier (1528), he did so in order to instruct courtiers and court ladies on how to adapt their roles to the changing times.

Sistine Chapel,Vatican City
Delphic Sibyl, fresco by Michelangelo, 1508–12; in the Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

Scala/Art Resource, New York

Spanish victory in Italy
In the immediate wake of the sack of Rome and the consequent disgrace of the Medici papacy, the Florentines expelled their Medici overlords. A French army under General Odet de Foix Lautrec finally arrived in 1528, but Andrea Doria, a Genoese admiral and aristocrat whose galleys had formerly been in the service of the French, unexpectedly switched sides and became a staunch supporter of Charles V. Plague took Lautrec's life and decimated the French army, and in 1529 the pope was forced to make peace with Charles in the Treaty of Barcelona—as did Francis I in the Treaty of Cambrai. After almost 40 years of war, Italy submitted to Spanish pacification. Francis I renounced his claims in Italy, as well as in Artois and Flanders. The last Sforza was restored in Milan with the provision that the duchy would pass to Spain upon his death. Venice lost its recent mainland conquests. The Papal States were restored, and in 1530 the pope crowned Charles V emperor and king of Italy and made vague promises to call a council to address the Protestant schism and reform the church. In exchange, Spanish forces reinstated the Medici in Florence.

Italy remained subject to sporadic French incursions into Savoy in 1536–38 and 1542–44 during a third and fourth Habsburg-Valois war, and Spain's Italian possessions were increasingly taxed to support Charles's continual campaigns; however, for the remainder of his reign, Charles's armies fought the French, the Ottomans, and the Protestant princes outside Italy. Notable for Italy was Charles V's capture of Tunis in 1535 and his glorious march up the Italian peninsula in 1536 to confirm his personal rule. But the Ottomans formally allied themselves with France against the Habsburgs thereafter, defeated an allied fleet at Prevesa, retook Tunis in 1538, and stepped up their assault on the Venetian empire in the Mediterranean. With the eventual failure of Charles's attempts to secure Germany, his great continental empire was divided. Italy became a part of the Spanish Habsburg inheritance of his son, Philip II (ruled 1556–98), and, after the Spanish victory over the French at St. Quentin (1557), the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) officially confirmed the era of Spanish domination that had existed in Italy since 1530.

Spanish Italy
Spain thus established complete hegemony over all the Italian states except Venice, which alone maintained its independence. Several Italian states were ruled directly, while others remained Spanish dependents. Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia (which had all been dependencies of Aragon), as well as Milan, came under direct Spanish rule and owed their allegiance to the sovereign according to their own laws and traditions. Their foreign policy interests were subordinated to the imperial designs of Spain, which also appointed their chief officers (viceroys in Naples, Palermo, and Cagliari; a governor in Milan) and administered their internal affairs through local councils. From the beginning of Philip

II’s reign, Italian affairs, which had originally been administered by the Council of Aragon, were coordinated by a Council of Italy in Madrid. At this council, the three major states—Naples, Sicily, and Milan—were each represented by two regents, one Castilian and one native. Sardinia remained a dependency of Aragon. The king, however, continued to receive and be responsive to embassies sent by various groups outside official channels until the Spanish Habsburg line died out in 1700.

A vitriolic anti-Spanish polemic has long dominated the historiography of early modern Italy. It accuses Spanish rule of an authoritarianism closed to new ideas and innovation, of presiding over an empty formalism in literary expression, and of promoting spagnolismo, an exaggerated and ostentatious pomp—all perceived as the fruits of a decadent, backward-looking colonial domination. Faulting Spain for trying to integrate Italy within its absolutist and imperial program or blaming Italy’s 17th-century decline on Spanish social and economic policies has served nationalistic fervour since the 16th century, but it has missed both the benefits of Spanish rule to Italian peace and security and the main causes of crisis in 17th-century Italy. To understand the latter, one must examine the internal conflicts and economic impediments that existed within the Italian states themselves rather than look to an absentee Spanish scapegoat. And, above all, early modern Italy must be understood in a wider European context and in relation to the economic shifts wrought by the new Asian and American trade. The touchstone for modern scholarship is Fernand Braudel’s The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (1949), which continues to inspire and challenge research into Philip II’s empire and beyond.

The Kingdom of Naples

Pedro de Toledo (viceroy 1532–53) reorganized the Kingdom of Naples and placed it firmly within the Spanish monarchical orbit dominated by Castile. Within the kingdom, he oversaw the eradication of the pro-French barons and attempted to install centralized, absolutist policies. Within the city, he developed new residential quarters and strengthened Spanish defenses against outside attack. He enjoyed unparalleled personal prestige; his daughter Eleonora was married to Cosimo I (the Great), the Medici duke of Tuscany, in 1539. But his power had limits, as was shown by the successful Neapolitan opposition to the introduction of the Inquisition in 1547. Pedro’s policy was governed by the principle of “divide and conquer,” which played upon rampant inequalities between the barons and the people and between the capital and the countryside.

The most important ruling body in the kingdom was the Collateral Council, comprising five regents presided over by the viceroy, with a judicial council and a financial council exercising their respective competencies at its side. A new elite of lawyers, a “nobility of the robe,” began to emerge, sustaining the Spanish regime with its indispensable bureaucratic services. The Neapolitan parliament, which consisted of representatives of the city districts (seggi), of the feudal nobility, and of royally owned towns, had only two functions—to authorize taxes and to request rights and privileges from the king in exchange—but this body was suspended in 1642.

In the capital the town council, which seated representatives of the city’s five noble seggi and of a citywide commoners’ seggio, emerged as the most important institution of municipal government. The most pressing problem facing the city administration was the provision of food. Naples had grown to 250,000 inhabitants by 1600, which ranked it first in population among the cities of western Europe.

In the countryside, where some 90 percent of the population still lived, the aristocracy retained strong social and economic control. The Spanish government’s bureaucracy did attempt to break the barons’ political stronghold and to limit the worst abuses, but success depended upon a healthy economy and an emerging middle class, both of which began to falter after 1585. The 12 provinces of the kingdom remained atomized, and their unarticulated markets were often attached to the trading networks of foreign states such as Venice or Genoa rather than integrated to form a

national market within the kingdom itself.

The kingdom of Sicily

Sicily's administration had existed apart from that of the mainland since 1282, when the island had revolted against Angevin rule and come under the Aragonese crown. In the 16th century Sicily remained the cornerstone of the Spanish Mediterranean policy against the Ottomans, and its agricultural products continued to be the staple of long-distance trade.

As in Naples, Spanish policy in Sicily attempted to modify traditional baronial abuses. Spain allowed the barons considerable autonomy over their large agrarian estates, including the exploitation of their tenant farmers, but it prevented open feuds between barons and eroded their political power by excluding them from offices in the central government. Two local councils, one in judicial affairs and the other in public finance and administration, centralized Spanish government from the reign of Charles V. Parliament and the Inquisition competed for power with the viceroy. Parliament, which comprised three branches—clergy, nobility, and royal towns and districts—voted ordinary and special taxes, but its short and infrequent sessions prevented sustained opposition to Spanish policies. The Inquisition, on the other hand, was completely independent of the viceroy and often challenged his jurisdiction, but it received royal backing only in purely religious disputes. Above all, Spain played internal rivalries and sectional interests against one another for its own advantage. Constant struggles weakened all parties, and the numerous autonomous authorities held civil government in such check that it became immobilized and unable to make important decisions.

Sardinia

Sardinia's links to the kingdom of Aragon dated from the 14th century. Long-standing assimilation to Spanish culture had reinforced the patriarchal structure of the local nobility, whose chief source of wealth was sheep raising. As in Naples and Sicily, the Spanish introduced little change into government, preferring instead to support an aristocratic-monarchist regime. The viceroy was often a Sardinian, the native parliament had three branches, and international politics separated Sardinia from Italian affairs.

The duchy of Milan

When Francesco II Sforza died childless in 1535, Milan devolved to Charles V and was administered by a Spanish governor, who maintained traditional institutions. The duchy consisted of nine provinces, each dominated by a small group of families resident in their provincial capitals. Central administration from Milan rested primarily with the Senate, a judicial and legislative body that maintained its authority under Spanish rule despite inevitable confrontations with the governor. Official Spanish policy aimed at maintaining an equilibrium between centralization and home rule.

Two institutional changes, nevertheless, had significant effects upon the society of Milanese Lombardy. First, by 1584 the membership of the Senate was reduced from 28 to 15 as well as altered in its composition; whereas half of its members had been aristocratic landowners and high-ranking clerics, they now were all professional lawyers. As in Naples, the nobility of the robe, who in Milan were lawyers drawn from the urban patriciate, grew at the expense of the old landed nobility and formed an essential alliance with the Spanish crown. Second, tax reforms aimed at marshaling Milanese resources for the Spanish wars affected the society of the duchy, not only in equalizing the tax burden but also in redistributing power between city and countryside. Merchants, who had previously been tax-exempt, found their wealth (based on annual gross sales) taxed after 1594, and landowners not residing in cities, who had previously been taxed far above city dwellers, benefited from a new assessment system set by elected bodies of rural residents after 1561. These policies had unexpected long-term effects in the 17th century when economic interests were able to regroup and find a foothold in the countryside.

Milan's strategic importance as the gateway to Italy remained a keystone of Spain's imperial design, and, with war and revolt north of the Alps, Milan served as a critical staging area for men and supplies on the "Spanish road" from Genoa to Lombardy and from there through the Alpine passes to the Rhineland. During the Revolt of the Netherlands (1567), the Netherlands' Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) for independence, and the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), Milan was a focal point of Spanish military preparation.

The Roman Catholic Church had unusual influence and autonomy in Milan. Charles Cardinal Borromeo, member of a rich noble family of Milan and nephew of Pope Pius IV (reigned 1559–65), resided in his diocese after 1565 as the model bishop of the Catholic Reformation. He instituted seminaries, diocesan synods, and provincial councils, personally visited some 800 parishes, watched over the spiritual needs of monasteries, convents, and lay confraternities, fought heresy, and supported relief of the poor. Moreover, under his rule the Milanese church enjoyed unusual freedom of action and special privileges in furthering Catholic reform.

Principates and oligarchic republics

Spanish hegemony in Italy extended beyond the states under its direct control. The rulers of Savoy and Tuscany owed their titles to Spain, Genoa acted as Spain's chief banker, the papacy depended heavily on the Spanish monarchy in the age of the Counter-Reformation, and even independent Venice needed Spanish aid in protecting its Mediterranean empire from further erosion by the Turks. Several minor states were so small that they had little political influence; these included the republic of Lucca as well as several duchies that remained under the control of local noble families—the duchies of Modena, Reggio, and Ferrara under the Este family; the duchy of Mantua and Montferrat under the Gonzagas, and the duchy of Parma and Piacenza under the Farnese. These states, too, enjoyed the enforced Spanish peace within Italy and benefited from the security against foreign invasion. Their nobility intermarried with the Spanish aristocracy and absorbed Spanish culture.

The duchy of Savoy

During the Italian wars, France and Spain had occupied Savoy, a duchy that incorporated most of the present-day Piedmont, between France and the duchy of Milan. Allied with the victorious Spanish at the battle of St. Quentin (1557), its legitimate heir, Duke Emmanuel Philibert (ruled 1559–80), recovered his state with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) and began to rebuild and strengthen it. He transferred the capital across the Alps from Chambéry to Turin, which grew as a fortified and planned city. He limited the power of numerous localities and centralized state finances. Increased taxes and economic recovery allowed him to maintain a small but disciplined standing army, which became the basis of Piedmontese military power. His son Charles Emmanuel I (ruled 1580–1630) followed an expansionist policy with varying success. In 1589 he failed to take Geneva, and in 1601 he ceded some territory to France in exchange for the marquessate of Saluzzo. He also engaged in debilitating wars in an unsuccessful quest to take Montferrat.

The duchy of Tuscany

When Spanish arms restored the Medici to Florence in 1530, they bestowed on them the title "dukes of Tuscany." After the assassination of the first duke, Alessandro, in 1537, Cosimo I (ruled 1537–74) succeeded him and developed a strong absolutist state. As a Spanish ally, Cosimo fought Siena (1552–55) and annexed it in 1557. The Spanish, however, retained five strategically important seaports, the Stato dei Presidi ("State of the Garrisons"), which were administered by Spanish Naples.

In 1569 Cosimo received the title grand duke of Tuscany. His sons Francis I (ruled 1574–87) and Ferdinand I (ruled 1587–1609) succeeded him, and the latter enlarged the free port of Livorno. In the early modern period the city of Florence had only about one-half of its medieval population, and it receded from the international scene, becoming the capital of a provincial court.

The republic of Genoa

In 1528 Andrea Doria initiated a constitutional reform by which nobles loyal to him gained power. Factionalism continued, however, especially between the "old" and "new" nobility. When serious disorders erupted in 1575, the old nobility abandoned the city, and a popular faction took their place beside the new nobility. A compromise mediated by Spain and the papacy averted civil war by reconstituting the ruling class. Wealth replaced status as the basis of social stratification and political alliance.

Andrea Doria's support of Charles V bolstered Spain's naval profile in the western Mediterranean. Genoa continued its control over Corsica through its central bank, the Bank of San Giorgio. Genoese bankers, who had extended their family businesses from Naples to Sevilla, replaced the German Fuggers as the primary financiers of the Spanish empire. At home, nobles invested in landed property and city residences, while silk manufacturing employed a large percentage of the Genoese working class.

The Republic of Venice

Defeat at Agnadello in 1509, followed by pressure from the Spanish Habsburgs in Lombardy and the Austrian Habsburgs to the north of the republic, limited Venice's Italian mainland empire. In addition, Ottoman expansion in the eastern Mediterranean disrupted Venice's trade in the Levant and chipped away at its overseas empire: lost were important ports of call in Albania and Greece in 1503, the Aegean islands north of Crete in 1540, Cyprus in 1571, and Crete itself in 1669. At the same time, Portuguese trade with Asia after 1498 and the rise of the Dutch city of Antwerp as an entrepôt for the distribution of goods to northern Europe seriously challenged Venice's trading monopoly. No longer the most powerful state in Italy, Venice still enjoyed internal cohesion, an extremely effective diplomatic corps, and a strong fleet to navigate an independent policy between Spain and the papacy.

Before the plague of 1576, Venice's population had risen to 180,000, with a patriciate of under 5 percent. A strong oligarchic tendency during the 16th century reinforced the power of the Council of Ten over the Senate, and the cleavage between rich and poor nobles widened. After 1583, however, the old nobility lost its bid to monopolize politics, and the Senate recovered power, which it applied to a more independent foreign policy. Textile manufacturing remained the most important trade until the precipitous decline of the woolen industry in the early 17th century. Venice's population stabilized at about 150,000.

In 1606 a papal interdict condemned Venice for refusing to repeal several laws limiting the church's traditional rights and for trying two priests in civil rather than ecclesiastical courts. Paolo Sarpi, the republic's state theologian, mounted an effective defense by arguing for state sovereignty in temporal affairs. The dispute ended in a compromise, mediated by France and Spain. Sarpi's The History of the Council of Trent (1619) later indicted the pope for usurping ecclesiastical authority and for manipulating the reform council to reinforce his power.

The Papal States

The papacy engaged in often flamboyant political maneuvers, especially during the reign of Julius II (1503–13), and in the architectural and intellectual renewal of Rome. Save for the brief reign of the last non-Italian pope before the 20th century, Adrian VI (reigned 1522–23), the papacy failed to respond to the spiritual crisis of the day. However, a predisposition for a religious revival, or Catholic Reformation, was fostered by the Christian humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam's biblical philosophy of Christ, by prophetic and apocalyptic interpretations of the Italian wars, and by an awareness of long-standing clerical abuses. Yet serious attempts at reform from above did not begin until the reign of Pope Paul III (1534–49). In 1536 he appointed a reform commission, which produced the important blueprint Consilium de emendanda ecclesia ("Project for the Reform of the Church"), and in 1537 he made the first attempt at convoking a reform council. By the 1540s, however, hopes for reunification of Catholics and Protestants had foundered. A true Counter-Reformation—that is, the Roman Catholic Church's conscious fight against Protestantism—began to take shape with papal approval of the Jesuit order in 1540 and with the creation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1542. New religious orders such as the Theatines (1524), the Capuchins (1528), and the Jesuits (1534) provided the backbone of the new class of religious leaders, although the apostasy to Calvinism in 1542 of Bernardino Ochino, vicar-general of the Capuchins, was a serious setback. The Jesuits' educational program, above all, began to prepare laymen of high social status for leadership roles. The Council of Trent (1545–63) uncompromisingly defined Catholic dogma and outlined a program for disciplinary reform and administrative centralization. The Index librorum prohibitorum (1559; "Index of Forbidden Books"), a list of books condemned by the Roman Catholic Church as pernicious to faith and morals, was compiled by a censorship board that limited orthodox expression to a narrowly controlled range.

In politics, the papacy was dependent on Spain yet eager to find an alternative to Spanish domination in Italy. Although ecclesiastical reform occupied most of the church's energies, Pope Pius V (reigned 1566–72) promoted

the Holy League, which checked Ottoman expansion into the western Mediterranean by defeating the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto (1571). Under Pope Gregory XIII (reigned 1572–85) the Julian calendar was reformed into the modern Gregorian calendar. Pope Sixtus V (reigned 1585–90) launched a Catholic missionary counteroffensive in central Europe and reorganized the Roman Curia. He, along with Clement VIII (reigned 1592–1605), also patronized the urban development and new artistic flowering in Rome that culminated in the Baroque creations of Gian Lorenzo Bernini and the architect Francesco Borromini. These two popes also fought rural banditry and brought Ferrara, Urbino, and Castro back under direct papal rule.

St. Gregory the Great
Pope Gregory the Great receiving inspiration from the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, painting by Carlo Saraceni, c. 1590; in the National Gallery of Ancient Art, Rome.

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Culture and society
Cities and courts spawned the high culture of late Renaissance Italy. Ranging from Pietro Aretino’s merciless lampoons of the scandalous lives of the princes of the church in Renaissance Rome to the mysticism and Christocentric piety embraced by the intellectual circle surrounding the Spanish humanist Juan de Valdés in Naples, Italian culture in the 16th century defined itself for or against the church. Machiavelli, in a famous chapter of Discorsi sopra la prima deca di tito Livio (1513–19; “Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy”), argued that the church was the cause of Italian ills because it had lost its religious moorings and had kept the Italians politically divided. A rigid Counter-Reformation orthodoxy, however, condemned some of Italy’s most brilliant intellectuals—philosophers and scientists such as Giordano Bruno, who was burned as a heretic in 1600, Tommaso Campanella, who was imprisoned in 1599 for 27 years, and Galileo Galilei, who was forced to recant his Copernican beliefs and was placed under permanent house arrest in 1633.

At the same time, however, Italy was at the forefront of a movement that fostered scientific exchange by establishing scientific academies—the Roman Accademia dei Lincei (founded in 1603), the Florentine Accademia del Cimento (1657), and the Neapolitan Accademia degli Investiganti (1665). In fields such as drama (both tragedy and comedy), music (both religious and secular), art history, rhetoric, and political theory, Italians of the late Renaissance played formative roles—the poets Torquato Tasso and Giambattista Marino, the composers Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Claudio Monteverdi, the artist and art historian Giorgio Vasari, and the political theorist and statesman Giovanni Botero, to name just a few. These examples demonstrate the continuity of Italy’s cultural achievement in the period that followed the High Renaissance.

Society and economy

The expanding demographic and economic base of Italy provided the wherewithal for the political and cultural programs of the 16th century. From the mid-15th-century demographic low point after the 1347–48 plague, Italy, along with the rest of western Europe, recovered dramatically. Between 1400 and 1600 the Italian population nearly doubled, increasing from about 7 million to about 13 million, and prices rose sharply, with cereal prices tripling and quadrupling. Increased demand, the increased supply of money from the silver of the New World, and profligate military expenditures fueled high inflation. Italy's most distinctive feature was its highly urbanized life. In 1550, 30 cities—more than in any other region in the West—had populations of more than 10,000.

Rural areas nevertheless still accounted for almost 88 percent of the total population, and, given the relative parity in birth and death rates, cities grew primarily as a result of rural emigration. Wheat and wool were the chief agricultural products, and the spread of capitalist agriculture in the 16th century was an important ingredient in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Textile production of both woolens and silks continued to be the major industry in the cities, but the precocious economic development of Italy in manufacturing, trade, and finance came to a crashing halt during the dislocations of the 17th century.

The economic recovery of the second half of the 16th century challenged the traditional hierarchical ordering of society. Nobility and clergy, the two most identifiable groups, did not lose their status but slowly changed character. With the demise of old families and the rise of a new nobility based on wealth and public service, social mobility in the cities put the old aristocracy on the defensive until it was able to forge new alliances with the ruling princes and the bourgeois bankers and merchants. At the same time, demographic growth and a yawning gap between wages and prices threatened to create an even larger disparity between rich and poor. In good times, the lower classes could provide a new labour market, fueling industrial production; in economically bad times, however, sickness, unemployment, and the rising price of bread could drive them down into the vortex of poverty and even push them to the point of rebellion.

The 17th-century crisis

The economic boom of the late 16th century began to stall throughout Europe. The first signs of hardship appeared in Italy after 1585, and famine persisted through the 1590s. New waves of plague struck northern Italy and Tuscany in 1630–31 and southern Italy, Lazio, and Genoa in 1656–57, with population losses between one-fourth and one-fifth, respectively. The large cities of Milan, Naples, and Genoa lost as much as half of their population. In addition, war in northern Europe after 1618 and in the Middle East between the Ottomans and the Iranians from 1623–39 disrupted Italy's important export markets; war between Spanish, German, French, and Piedmontese forces moved to Italy between 1628 and 1659; and social conflicts within the Spanish states contributed to the decline of Italy relative to northwestern Europe.

Both agricultural production and urban industries entered into crisis in the decade 1611–20, reaching their low point about 1650. In the south, extensive wheat monoculture exhausted the soil and led to deforestation and soil erosion. Further, noble owners drained off profits for expenditures on urban luxuries, and indebtedness placed commercial grain farmers at greater risk as grain prices fell in the 17th century. In the north, intensive agriculture supported the numerous large cities, but overexpansion onto unproductive land, soil depletion, and the loss of credit pushed the region to the limits of what the population could support. In the cities, wool manufacturing fell by 50 percent in the 1620s and all but disappeared thereafter, although silk production held its own. Commercial and banking activities, once the fastest-growing industries, now constricted, and foreign imports braked further development at home. Italy's early industrial lead lost to increased competition from northwestern Europe as new products at lower prices replaced the traditional ones in the Italian markets. The Italian guilds' opposition to technological and organizational change, higher taxes, and higher labour costs prevented the adaptability required to surmount the short-term crisis, which instead turned into a

long-term structural realignment. Only in Lombardy was there a successful shift to the putting-out system, which transferred urban industries to the countryside.

The economic involution reinforced the social hierarchy, favoured investment in landed property and rents over commerce and industry, and reinvigorated noble pretensions. With capital shifted from the manufacturing and service sectors to agricultural production of cash crops such as olive oil, wine, and raw silk, the number of skilled urban craftsmen and merchants decreased while that of illiterate peasants increased, and landed-noble power intensified. The church reasserted itself in every aspect of social life, from land ownership to ecclesiastical organization, from the defense of orthodoxy and the culture of the Council of Trent to the education of the ruling class. As the economic crisis deepened, middling ranks lost out, and social stratification between rich and poor rigidified.

In the political sphere, Spain's involvement in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) and subsequent wars with other European powers—financed in part by taxes on its Italian possessions—drained Italy. As Spain declined, it dragged its Italian realms down with it. Revolts broke out in Palermo and Naples in 1647. In Naples a revolt of July 7 was mistakenly identified as a plebeian rebellion bearing the name of a young fishmonger, Masaniello, although he was murdered within 10 days and had actually been a tool of bourgeois elements seeking greater political power in the city. The uprising spread to the countryside, established a republic that sought French protection, and assumed the character of an open rebellion against Spain and native feudal lords. Internal dissension and the arrival of the Spanish fleet brought an end to the revolt by April 1648. The social and economic crisis deepened in Naples after the failure of the revolt and a recurrence of the plague in 1656. Lost was any hope of an alliance between the middle classes and the urban proletariat or rural masses against the landed aristocracy. Paradoxically, renewed Spanish reliance on the nobility of the robe fostered the very class that was to lead the cultural renewal that made Naples one of the intellectual centres of 18th-century Italy.

Reform and Enlightenment in the 18th century

After the death of the last Spanish Habsburg, Charles II (ruled 1665–1700), fighting over the remnants of Spain's European empire consumed the continent's powers in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14). The Treaties of Utrecht (1713) and Rastatt (1714) inaugurated a new pattern of state relations in Italy between Austrian Habsburgs, Spanish Bourbons (with Bourbon France always in the background), and the independent states. After complicated military and diplomatic maneuvers, this pattern eventually stabilized into a long-term equilibrium. In the initial treaties, Naples, Sardinia, and Milan (which had incorporated Mantua after the last Gonzaga had sold it to Louis XIV in 1701) passed to the Austrian Habsburgs; and Sicily went to Victor Amadeus II, duke of Savoy, who assumed the title of king of Sicily. Renewed Spanish hostilities, however, forced Victor Amadeus to cede Sicily to Austria in exchange for Sardinia in the Treaty of The Hague (1720). Spain acquired the duchy of Parma and Piacenza in 1731. In 1734, during the War of the Polish Succession, Charles, son of the Bourbon Philip V of Spain, conquered the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily from Austria. Spain had thus regained its two largest Italian possessions. After the Medici dynasty in Tuscany died out in 1737, Francis Stephen (Francis I)—duke of Lorraine, husband of Maria Theresa of Austria, and Holy Roman emperor after 1745—ruled as grand duke of Tuscany from Vienna. And in 1748, after the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), Austria regained Milan, which it had lost more than once in the preceding years.

Society and economy

A slow economic recovery began in Italy in the mid-1680s, but it remained weak into the early 18th century. A slump in the 1730s gave way to strong mid-century economic growth, until the famines of 1763–67 highlighted the weakness and inefficiency of government policies. Regional differences in Italy's agricultural structure led to even greater divergences between north and south. Whereas some northern urban industries found refuge in smaller centres and rural settings, the south came to rely economically almost exclusively on agriculture. Overall, Italy's foreign trade decreased and its

exports shifted from high-value manufactured goods to relatively inexpensive raw materials (including agricultural products) and semifinished goods, while it became a net importer of finished industrial products. At the same time, the Italian domestic market also contracted, and increasing social and institutional constraints further limited productive and mercantile opportunities. While Italy's population between 1700 and 1800 rose by about one-third, to 18 million, that of the rest of Europe grew at twice that rate. Italy's relative demographic and economic stagnation were to prevent an agrarian or industrial revolution during the 18th century.

The aristocracy retained hegemonic control of politics and economics, dominating land ownership and manipulating legal and political institutions in the towns to maintain their position. Tensions and conflicts arose from time to time between the central authority of the absolutist states and the nobility, between the rich bourgeoisie or professional classes and the nobility, and among the nobles themselves, but the nobility blocked, worked out compromises with, and co-opted these rival groups to preserve aristocratic predominance. In the north, especially in the republican states, city oligarchies resisted erosion of their power and privileges. In sharp contrast, the social and economic position of the urban masses and the growing rural population deteriorated, while the difficulties of daily life increased.

Political thought and early attempts at reform

By the beginning of the 18th century, a new cultural climate opened Italy to a wide range of European ideas—especially the philosophical thought of René Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, Benedict de Spinoza, Pierre Bayle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, and Hugo Grotius. With it new cultural institutions came to the fore. The Academy of Arcadia, founded in Rome in 1690, exemplified the channeling of energies for rationalism and innovation. Among its more famous members, Gian Vincenzo Gravina, Ludovico Antonio Muratori, and Giambattista Vico gained renown by launching juridical, historical, aesthetic, and "scientific" critiques of society. Vico's Scienza nuova (1725; The New Science), the most enduring work produced by this group, found tepid reception in its own day, and the author's ideas on a universal philosophy of history won wide acceptance among Enlightenment thinkers only in the 1770s. Paolo Mattia Doria (1662?–1746) and the Medinaceli Academy in Naples also employed historical inquiry to seek remedies for society's ills. Doria revived the idea of a Platonic republicanism of philosophic magistrates, in which an anti-Enlightenment Catholicism would become a kind of civil religion. In Naples he led his group of self-styled "ancients" against the scientific "moderns" led by the Neapolitan diplomat Celestino Galiani and Bartolomeo Intieri, a Florentine factor in Naples who provided a link to Tuscan intellectual circles. The ministerial class that developed in Spanish Italy from the early 16th century helped foster such networks of intellectual exchange between the cities of Italy and between Italy and the broader cosmopolitan centres of 18th-century Europe.

The political and cultural roles of the church—in particular, the supranational character of the papacy, the immunity of clerics from the state's legal and fiscal apparatus, the church's intolerance and intransigence in theological and institutional matters, as well as its wealth and property—constituted the central problems in the reform schemes of Italy's nascent intellectual movement. The most incisive breakthrough came from Pietro Giannone (1676–1748), a Neapolitan jurist, who employed a jurisdictional, historical method to oppose church abuse of power and to break the church's stranglehold on the state. Probably the strongest arguments for church reform came from Enlightenment thinkers Francesco Scipione, marchese di Maffei (1675–1755), and Muratori (1672–1750), who sought to reconcile politics with morality and religion. Muratori's Della pubblica felicità (1749; "On Public Happiness") reached Bourbon audiences in French and Spanish translations and was probably read in the Austrian Habsburg realms by Maria Theresa herself.