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Abstracts

GIANCARLO POIDOMANI, *La Grande Guerra dei siciliani: il lutto e la memoria*

For Italy, the First World War represented a very important step in the process of nationalisation that had started in 1861. It was the first Italian collective experience: encompassing men, women and children, civilians and military, both at the front and in the regions furthest from the north-eastern border. However, above all, the war strengthened ties between the Centre (the State) and the Periphery (the local area).

Even for Sicily, the war was a revolution that became engraved in peoples' mentality and habits. The "nationalisation of the Sicilian masses" involved the development of a collective consciousness never known before. At the front Sicilian peasants, they found themselves side by side with farmers from other regions and learned to understand other dialects and the customs of other regions.

For many Sicilian soldiers war represented a chance to go and discover, for the first time, the places and landscapes of their country, which they had, until then, "seen" only in the pages of textbooks. War for Sicily was principally a factor of nationalisation, especially for the more than 500,000 mobilised Sicilians. Between 1915 and 1922 (when the war has already been over for four years in major battlefields) more than 55.000 Sicilian soldiers died. Their death, if not to be seen in its rhetorical terms of "sacrifice" and "toll", deserves to be duly remembered as a huge period of mourning that hundreds of local communities sought to establish by publishing books of condolence and the building of monuments to the fallen.

Almost every family was heavily affected by the conflict through death, mutilation, injuries (physical or psychological) of a father, a husband, a son, a brother, a boyfriend, a fellow student or colleague or a near or distant relative. By reconstructing the magnitude of the human sacrifice and the story of the monuments, this essay analyses Sicilian mourning and its evolution in local communities who had lost in the war the most vital component of their younger population.

Keywords:

First World War

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