PART THREE

SOCIETY, ADMINISTRATION, AND ECONOMY
CHAPTER NINE

NOBLE PRESENCE AND STRATIFICATION IN THE TERRITORIES OF SPANISH ITALY*

Giovanni Muto

Exchanges Between Italy and Spain in “Spanish” Italy

We need first to clarify an ambiguous point, the term “Spanish Italy,” which provided the title for the conference on which the present volume is based, but which is a term that contemporary documents never use to refer to the Italian territories that formed a part of the imperial community of the Spanish Habsburgs. In the records of the various councils and royal secretariats in Madrid, each state is always called by its ancient and original title: the Duchy of Milan, the Kingdom of Naples, the Kingdom of Sicily, the Kingdom of Sardinia. Occasionally the term provincia (province) appears, but only in documents organized as an exposition or narration, or else in memoirs or in the political literature. Although the term has come into common use in recent historiography, it has never acquired a strong significance—that is, it has never stood for a process, real or potential, of achieving a gradual uniformity among political ideas or common administrative practices in the areas under the Spanish crown. Quite to the contrary: each of these territories preserved its distinct institutional and administrative identity during the two centuries of the early modern period. Even where literary and artistic production are concerned, relations between Spain and its Italian provinces seem to have been marked by strong and reciprocal exchanges, but (in the Italian areas at least) these never led to the adoption of Spanish cultural modes. The only significant borrowings that may have occurred were on the linguistic level, in both daily speech patterns and in the “higher” linguistic forms of written speech generated by administrative practices or used in the chanceries.1

---

* Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane.
1 For an excellent analysis of the diffusion of linguistic borrowings from Spanish in Naples and other parts of Italy, see Gian Luigi Beccaria, Spagnolo e spagnoli in Italia: Riflessi iberici sulla lingua italiana del Cinque e Seicento (Turin: Giappichelli, 1968).