

FRANCHETTI, LEOPOLDO (+) SIDNEY SONNINO

Condizione Politiche e Amministrative (+) I contadini in Sicilia. 2 vols. - [FIRST SCIENTIFIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SICILIAN MAFIA]

Référence : 54405

Firenze, G. Barbera, 1877. 8vo. 2 vols. both in brown half cloth, the Franchetti-volume with paper title-label to spine. Light wear to extremities and internally with a few occasional brown spots. XI, (2), 489 pp" XVI, 476 pp.

Commentaire : First edition of Sonnino and Franchetti's landmark work, constituting the very first description of the Sicilian Mafia and a seminal work in Italian anthropology and sociology in general. In 1876, Sonnino traveled to Sicily with Leopoldo Franchetti to conduct a private investigation into the state of Sicilian society. In 1877, the two men published their research on Sicily in a substantial two-part report for the Italian Parliament. In the first part Sonnino analysed the lives of the island's landless peasants. Leopoldo Franchetti's half of the report, Political and Administrative Conditions in Sicily, was an analysis of the Mafia in the nineteenth century that is still considered authoritative today. Franchetti would ultimately influence public opinion about the Mafia more than anyone else until Giovanni Falcone over a hundred years later. Political and Administrative Conditions in Sicily is the first convincing explanation of how the Mafia came to be. "The situation in Sicily was at the centre of the political struggle: it was an electoral stronghold for the left, a scene for both great social tensions and an acute outbreak of crime. The was the context that Franchetti and Sonnino found when they went to Sicily to carry out their private enquiry, unfettered by the needs and relationships which could have conditioned the official enquiry. They visited the island in the first half of 1876 and then wrote the two volumes of the enquiry separately (Franchetti wrote about the political and administrative conditions, Sonnino about the peasants). In particular, Franchetti's volume gave rise to two crucial questions which marked (and, in part, still do) civil debates in contemporary Italy: The Southern questions and the issue of the mafia." (Coluccello, Challenging the Mafia Mystique: Cosa Nostra from Legitimation to Denunciation). Franchetti saw the Mafia as an "industry of violence" and described the designation of the term "Mafia": "the term mafia found a class of violent criminals ready and waiting for a name to define them, and, given their special character and importance in Sicilian society, they had the right to a different name from that defining vulgar criminals in other countries". He saw the Mafia as deeply rooted in Sicilian society and impossible to quench unless the very structure of the island's social institutions were to undergo a fundamental change. The Franchetti-Sonnino report was attacked, disbelieved and labelled as 'unpatriotic'. It is now considered one of the most coherent and comprehensive accounts of the Sicilian mafia and its surroundings. (Govi, I Classici che hanno fatto L'Italia, P. 284)

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