This is a medical and social history of Italy’s largest city during the cholera epidemics of 1884 and 1910–11. It also is the first extended study of cholera in modern Italy, which sets Naples in a comparative international framework.

The book explores the factors that exposed Naples to risk; it examines such popular responses as social hysteria, riots and religiosity; and it traces therapeutic strategies. The disease is also related to larger historical issues, such as the nature of liberal statecraft, the ‘Southern Question’, mass emigration, organized crime, urban renewal and the medical profession.

Cholera in Naples became a metaphor for discontent with the regime: the 1884 outbreak was a national issue which led to the rebuilding of the city amidst widespread corruption. Despite rebuilding, the city suffered a major epidemic in 1910–11. Stunned, the Italian state launched a campaign of silence. The authorities suppressed the truth, lied to the international community and fabricated statistics. This work thus extends the historiography of cholera in Europe into the twentieth century and analyses the only known case in which a major epidemic was systematically concealed.
NAPLES IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA, 1884–1911
For Judith
Contents

List of figures  page  xi
List of tables  xii
Preface  xiv
Glossary of Italian and Neapolitan terms  xv

Introduction  1

PART I: SANITARY ANXIETIES

1 A city at risk  11

PART II: THE PUBLIC EPIDEMIC OF 1884

2 From Provence to the Bay of Naples  59
3 Death in Naples, 1884  99
4 Survival and recovery  155

PART III: RISANAMENTO AND MIASMA

5 Rebuilding: medicine and politics  181

PART IV: THE SECRET EPIDEMIC OF 1910–1911

6 The return of cholera: 1910  233
7 Concealment and crisis: 1911  297

Conclusion: Neapolitan cholera and Italian politics  360
APPENDIX

Contents

Appendix 371

Notes 380
Select bibliography 448
Index 463
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map 1.1</th>
<th>The Bay of Naples</th>
<th>page 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map 1.2</td>
<td>The <em>sezioni</em> of Naples</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.1</td>
<td>Italy and Provence</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 5.1</td>
<td>The renewal and expansion of Naples</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 5.2</td>
<td><em>Risanamento</em></td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 6.1</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tables

1.1 European capital cities: average annual deaths per 1,000 inhabitants, 1878–83

1.2 Naples: annual deaths per 1,000 inhabitants, 1878–83

1.3 Cholera in Naples, 1836–73

1.4 Population of the ten largest Italian cities, 1884

1.5 Naples: population per square kilometer, 1884

1.6 Average industrial salaries and wages in Naples, 1884

1.7 Prevailing prices in Naples, 1884

1.8 Male wages in selected trades in Europe, 1884 (expressed in 1884 US dollars)

1.9 Naples: average rent per room (1806 = 100)

1.10 Eligible voters in Naples for the municipal elections of 1875

3.1 Causes of death in Naples in 1884

3.2 Cholera in the sezioni of Naples, 1884

3.3 Success of treatment in the Neapolitan cholera hospitals, 1884

3.4 Age at death of cholera victims in the sezione Mercato in 1884

3.5 Rates of death from cholera by age group: Italy, 1884

3.6 Cholera in Paris, 1832–92

4.1 Deaths from cholera in Naples, 1886–94

5.1 Expenses of phase one of risanamento

5.2 Assets available to complete phase one of risanamento

5.3 Flow of the population evicted by risanamento, 1889–1900

5.5 Daily food budget of an average Neapolitan family, 1910

5.6 Leading causes of death in Naples, 1909

5.7 Expenditure on hospitals per 1,000 inhabitants in 1910

6.1 Deaths from cholera in Naples, 1884 and 1910

6.2 Cases of gastro-enteritis in Naples, 18–24 September, 1910

6.3 Annual average number of trans-oceanic emigrants, 1876–1910

6.4 Shipping tonnage in 1910
Tables

6.5 Passengers handled by leading European seaports in 1908 271
6.6 Emigrants detained at the Casa degli emigranti 288
6.7 Monthly emigration from Naples, 1909–10 289
7.1 Cases of cholera among Italian immigrants at Ellis Island, 1911 319
7.2 Cholera carriers among Italian immigrants at Ellis Island, 1911 320
7.3 Cholera deaths in Naples, 1911 329
7.4 Summer mortality in Naples, 1908–11 330
7.5 Italian emigration to North and South America, 1910 339
7.6 Italian emigration to Argentina, 1910–13 343
7.7 Patient statistics: Cotugno Lazaretto, 3 May to 31 August 1911 357
A1 Male deaths from cholera classified by occupational group: Italy, 1884 372
A2 Deaths from cholera by province: Italy, 1884 373
A3 Deaths from gastro-enteritis in Naples, 1911 375
A4 Daily wages of farm workers in Italy, 1905 376
A5 Steerage fares from Naples to New York, 1905–11 376
A6 Deaths from cholera in Italy in 1911 377
A7 Reported deaths and bacteriologically confirmed deaths, Italy 1911 379
A8 Monthly departures of emigrants from Naples and Genoa, 1909 379
Preface

History is a collective enterprise, and one of my chief pleasures as an author is to express my appreciation to the many people who have contributed to this project. Professors Francesco Barbagallo and Paolo Frascani generously provided me with helpful advice on archives in Naples. Dr M. Soscia, Medical Director of the Cotugno Hospital, was a kind host, and he graciously assisted me in locating materials in the Hospital library and archive. The staffs at the National Library of Medicine at Bethesda, Maryland; the National Archives in Washington; the National Library at Naples; the Archive of the Bank of Naples; the State Archive at Naples; and the Sterling Library at Yale University provided endless and invaluable assistance in locating sources.

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Most of all, however, I would like to express thanks to my wife, Judith. She was an inexhaustible source of enthusiasm, advice and humour. It is more than a rhetorical flourish to state that this book would not have appeared without her. The original idea for this project began in our discussions; she encouraged me to continue when I considered abandoning it after first learning of the wholesale wartime destruction of documents relating to the city of Naples in the Giolittian era; and she had the idea that material on the Neapolitan epidemic of 1911 must have survived in American archives.
Glossary of Italian and Neapolitan terms used in the text

ampliamento
asilo degli emigranti
banchisla
basso (pl. bassi)
basso ceto
caronzari
carabiniere (pl. carabinieri)
Casa degli emigranti
colmate
colonna infame
comune
Consiglio superiore di sanità
dazio consumo
decimi di alea
Direzione generale della sanità
duce
fondaco (pl. fondaci)
gioco piccolo
giunta
insipienza
locanda
locandiere
medico condotto
opere pie
ottobrate
padulano
plebe
popolino
popolaglia
popolo minuto

expansion
quarantine station for emigrants
unofficial emigrant banker
ground-floor slum dwelling
lower classes
makers of catgut
military police
state-run emigrant hostel
landfills
column of infamy
municipality
Superior Health Council
consumption levy
builders' contingency fund
Department of Public Health
leader
slum tenement
underground lottery
executive committee of city hall
stupidity
boarding house
boarding-house proprietor
public health doctor
Catholic benevolent associations
October harvest festival
market gardener
common people
lower classes
rabble
lower classes
**Glossary**

- questore: chief of police
- risanamento: urban renewal
- scirocco: South-East wind
- sevaioli: makers of tallow
- sezione: borough of the city of Naples
- signore: gentleman
- squarciare: to rip out
- stralci: cuts
- sventramento: disembowelment
- sventrare: to disembowel
- untore: poisoner
- vanella: skylight
- vico: lane
- zingaro: gypsy