

The two phenomena are often overlapping. One of the most rapid effects of the policies developed immediately after independence (obtained in 1956) was the liberalisation of the 'internal borders'. These previously determined the obligation to reside in the places of birth, significantly restricting movement. This liberalisation resulted in a high rate of mobility: first, towards the production centres around the big cities; then, abroad. Already in the aftermath of independence, and then even more rapidly in the 1960s, migration was encouraged both by the urbanisation process that followed independence and by the precarious living and working conditions in the central and southern areas of the country. The first Tunisian migratory contingents of a certain consistency left for three different directions: the first and prevailing one headed towards France, the second towards Libya, and, the third and lesser towards Algeria. The largest flow towards France was based on bilateral pacts on the transfer of labour that established the conditions of employment and residence.

The Tunisians who began to arrive in Italy were following two directions: one characterised by routes concerning the centre-south, the other one characterised by routes concerning the centre-north. In the first case, they arrived through Sicily following the Mahdia-Tunis-Trapani/Mazara del Vallo axis and, in the second case, they arrived from the Ile de France following the Paris-Lyon-Turin-Milan-Bologna axis. Initially, only Tunisians from the North-East coast, mainly fishermen, but also labourers with experience in construction and agricultural workers, headed towards Mazara.

### 3. 1979 CENSIS INVESTIGATION

In order to retrace this history, we can use the material published in the 1979 Censis Investigation. According to the authors of the study, the condition of isolation of immigrants, their professional placement in sectors defined as "less guaranteed" (Censis, 1979, p. 11), and their low participation in trade union structures determine the fact that

the perception of the dimensions and characteristics of the phenomenon is completely approximate, insofar as it is linked on the one hand to official data that record, not even exactly, only 'regular' immigration, and on the other hand to impressionistic and alarmist estimates that, upon initial verification, seem equally unfounded (Censis, 1979, p. 14).

The Censis research also includes a section dedicated to seafarers in the fishing sector recruited in Tunisia by shipowners from Mazara. This paragraph opens with a very harsh description of their working conditions. The section on fishing closes with a detailed description of the considerable mobility of Tunisians. This mobility could be defined as multilevel: between one job and another, but also between one territory and another. For most of them fishing represented only one of the possible occupations in the Trapani area during the 1970s.

The history of the Tunisians in the Trapani area from the end of the 1960s and for the following decade is an essential reference point for all those who intend to deal with the development of immigration in Italy from a historical perspective. As stated above, this concerns the beginning of a migratory flow that has then undergone further and multiple developments. This flow has developed and taken root in Western Sicily, an area that in the same historical phase was the protagonist of other migratory movements, mainly outgoing, as it was happening in the rest of Sicily and in Italy, too. Emigration, immigration, commuter mobility and internal migration intertwine and mix with great frequency: this is a typical feature of many social and economic contexts in the Mediterranean area, starting from the 1960s. Moreover, in this case, the specialisation and the peculiarity of a flow originating from a mobile work par excellence, the fishing one, emerge significantly.

But there are further elements of interest.

First of all – and this is a novelty in post-war Italy – the Tunisians' case began as an active recruitment of labour carried out by the shipowners of Mazara. This was part of a conscious choice, even though it took place within a general legal framework that lacked an organic