

# A Companion to Antonio Gramsci

*Essays on History and Theories of History,  
Politics and Historiography*

*Edited by*

Davide Cadeddu



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Sketch of Antonio Gramsci

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cadeddu, Davide, editor.

Title: A companion to Antonio Gramsci : essays on history and theories of history, politics and historiography / edited by Davide Cadeddu.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2020] | Series: Studies in critical social sciences, 1573-4234 ; volume 164 | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "In A Companion to Antonio Gramsci some of the most important Italian scholars of Gramsci's thought realize an intellectual account of the Gramscian historiography. The volume is organized into five parts. In the first, an updated reconstruction of his biographical events is offered. The second part provides three different perspectives permitting an analysis of the ideas and theories of history which emerge from Gramsci's writings. In the third section as well as the fourth section, the most explicitly political themes are considered. Finally, in the last part the timelines of twentieth century historiography in Italy are traced and a picture is painted of the reasons for the development of the principal problems surrounding the international literary output on Gramsci. Contributors include: Alberto Burgio, Davide Cadeddu, Giuseppe Cospito, Angelo d'Orsi, Michele Filippini, Guido Liguori, Marcello Montanari, Vittorio Morfino, Stefano Petrucciani, Michele Prospero, Leonardo Rapone, Giuseppe Vacca, and Marzio Zanantoni"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020011347 | ISBN 9789004426504 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004426511 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Gramsci, Antonio, 1891-1937. | Communism. | History--Philosophy. | Political science.

Classification: LCC HX289.7.G73 C6435 2020 | DDC 335.43--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020011347>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 1573-4234

ISBN 978-90-04-42650-4 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-42651-1 (e-book)

Copyright 2020 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Hes & De Graaf, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Rodopi, Brill Sense, Hotei Publishing, mentis Verlag, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh and Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

# Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgements	x
Notes on Contributors	xi

## PART 1

### *History*

- 1 Gramsci: From Socialism to Communism 3  
*Leonardo Rapone*
- 2 Antonio Gramsci: the Prison Years 13  
*Angelo d'Orsi*

## PART 2

### *Theories of History*

- 3 The Crisis of European Civilization in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci 29  
*Giuseppe Vacca*
- 4 Notes on Gramsci's Theory of History 38  
*Marcello Montanari*
- 5 The Layers of History and the Politics in Gramsci 47  
*Vittorio Morfino*

## PART 3

### *Communism*

- 6 Gramsci's Antidogmatic Reading of Marx 59  
*Stefano Petrucciani*
- 7 Gramsci, the October Revolution and its "Translation" in the West 70  
*Guido Liguori*

- 8 On the Transition to Communism 79  
*Alberto Burgio*

**PART 4**

***Hegemony***

- 9 Gramsci: Political Scientist 93  
*Michele Prospero*
- 10 The “Prison Notebooks”: Hegemony and Civil Society 105  
*Giuseppe Cospito*
- 11 On the Productive Use of Hegemony (Laclau, Hall, Chatterjee) 114  
*Michele Filippini*

**PART 5**

***Historiography***

- 12 The Influence and Legacy of Antonio Gramsci in Twentieth-Century  
Italy 127  
*Marzio Zanantoni*
- 13 The International Historiography on Gramsci in the Twenty-First  
Century 146  
*Davide Cadeddu*
- Bibliographic Abbreviations 155
- Index 156

## Preface

Over the course of the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci became an author so often cited and so extensively studied at the international level that it now sometimes seems his cultural origins have been overlooked. Thanks to translations of his writings into English (and many other languages), Gramsci's thought has acquired a truly global audience and inspired scholars in different disciplinary areas by reaching beyond the original utterance in Italian. Almost daily, new research is being carried out: articles and books are published completely neglecting the scientific literature produced in the language that he himself spoke. This can be considered legitimate when Gramsci's thought is – more than anything else – an occasion and a stimulus with the aim of saying something other than what he himself affirmed, but the difficulty of accessing the primary sources of his political thought can sometimes produce an unintentional misunderstanding and conceptual inaccuracy. Reflecting on the relationship between scholarly studies in Italian and in other languages may perhaps lead us to speculate that while the first might be able to guarantee a greater philological precision and hermeneutic penetration, the second may demonstrate themselves to be more prone to developing the reformulation of Gramscian categories in the areas of sociology and anthropology besides those of historiography and politics.

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Gramsci's premature death, therefore, it was thought to organize a sort of intellectual account of the situation, including some of the most important Italian scholars of Gramsci's thought, and to arrange their musings around the relation between culture and politics, history and historiography. The results of this work forms a type of "companion" that is useful for a deep understanding of this author within an international dialogue which must express itself, nowadays, in English.

The volume is organized into five parts. In the first two essays – entitled *Gramsci: From Socialism to Communism* and *Antonio Gramsci: the Prison Years* –, under the general heading of "History", a concise and updated reconstruction of his biographical events is offered. The second part, dedicated to the "Theories of History", provides three different perspectives – summarized by the titles *The Crisis of European Civilization in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci*, *Notes on Gramsci's Theory of History* and *The Layers of History and Politics in Gramsci* – permitting an analysis of the ideas and theories of history which emerge from Gramsci's writings. In the third part, addressing the concept of "Communism" – with the essays *Gramsci and Marx: Notes and Reflections*, *Gramsci, the October Revolution and its "Translation" in the West* and *On the*

*Transition to Communism* –, as well as the fourth part, dedicated to the category of “hegemony” – with the articles *Gramsci: Political Scientist*, *The “Prison Notebooks”: Hegemony and Civil Society* and *On the Productive Use of Hegemony* (Laclau, Hall, Chatterjee) –, the most explicitly political themes are considered. Finally, in the last part, dedicated to “Historiography” – with the essays *The Influence and Legacy of Antonio Gramsci in Twentieth-Century Italy* and *The International Historiography on Gramsci in the Twenty-First Century* –, the timelines of twentieth century historiography in Italy are traced and a picture is painted of the reasons for the development of the principal problems surrounding the international literary output on Gramsci.

The collection of these essays exposes a view of the complex relationship between Antonio Gramsci and the twentieth century, a century that for reasons analyzed here in various ways showed itself to be very generous in conceding so much importance to one man amongst many men. This fact cannot be taken for granted. Gramsci died in 1937, in a century that was densely full of events and personalities. It is not a given that the twentieth century would leave space for a man such as Gramsci: someone who was politically defeated, physically disabled, (according to some) betrayed and who was also certainly the expression of a particular tendency of a current of political thought – Communism – considered by most (even well before the end of the 1900s) to be tragically flawed, in concrete political experience and therefore also in its theoretical formulations. Gramsci expressed his thought, then, in a country – Italy –, that is not always at the center of international attention. Thinking about the relation between Gramsci and the twentieth century or Gramsci within the twentieth century, first of all means this: remembering how the remnants of his experience and his political thought have surpassed the date of his death, invading and permeating the Italian and international political culture for the full duration of the twentieth century. Making the point of Gramsci in the 1900s signifies underlining how this author, as markedly different than others, became a century’s indisputable protagonist – both for the infinite interpretations that he elicited as well as for the uses and abuses of his thought and life story, with the purpose of quickly becoming one of most translated and cited Italian authors of all time together with such illustrious personalities as Dante Alighieri and Niccolò Machiavelli.

Considering this relationship between Gramsci and the twentieth century, today, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, also signifies something more – clearly connecting with the international dimension acquired by this author. The temporal reference, the twentieth century, therefore, also emerges fully pregnant from the point of view of declaring its own primacy over the

spatial dimension. Certainly, it is possible and it makes sense, for instance, to think about the relevance of Gramsci's influence on Brazilian culture or to reconstruct the debate between historians and political theorists in France or, furthermore, to consider new sources emerging from some Russian archive. All this is possible and makes sense. Still, the true relevance of this discourse is revealed by the consideration that Antonio Gramsci is a global author. Like all things pertaining to thought, principles and ideas, he can only be limited to and contained by a historic view leaving aside geographical or geopolitical confines. Through the categories of "before" and "after", we can better pursue the goals of valuing and understanding an intense and fecund historiographical dialogue that still leaves much to be said on Gramsci in the twenty-first century while also leaving room to write about an author who has risen to the position of an absolute classic of political thought.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Professor Daniela Saresella, who had the idea of organizing (and helped me to arrange) the conference devoted to Antonio Gramsci that elicited many of these reflections, and Professor Antonino De Francesco, director of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Milan, which financially supported the English translation. I would like also to thank Professors Marco Cuzzi and Irene Piazzoni, who supported me during the above-mentioned conference that took place in Milan (Italy) on October 2017, and Doctor Elia Zaru, who copy-edited the texts.