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**A maritime agency in Southern Italy. The «Michele Autuori srl» (XIX-XX centuries)**

*1. The seaport of Salerno in Southern Italy and the local economy*

Since ancient times the city of Salerno has felt the need for a stable and efficient sea landing, which would reconcile the need for mercantile flows and the interests of the local economy. However, for a long time the process of development of the seaport has been held back by the proximity of Amalfi, with its historic tradition of maritime traffic, also used by the Salerno inhabitants for naval operations until the second half of the ninth century.

Moreover, the development of the seaport was particularly limited by the phenomenon of silting, due to the geomorphological characteristics of the Salerno coastline, which made the internal seabed impracticable to the long pier.

Because of insufficient knowledge of engineering techniques, only in 1752, under the reign of Charles III of Bourbon, the chronic problem came to a partial solution through the construction of a pier of pylons that would allow the outflow of water and debris while keeping the level of the sea floor unchanged.

Thus, in 1852 Salerno could count on a modest port consisting of a pier that extended from the beach for a length of 150 meters and a 75-meter-long protection dam oriented from sirocco to mistral. That year the traffic reached the Amalfi ones thanks also to the impulse stimulated by the growing number of small local industries.

Only at the beginning of the twentieth century, thanks to the state intervention as part of a plan to reorganize ports of national interest, the enlargement interventions were completed realizing the first true port structure that eventually represented the fulcrum of the provincial activities for more than half a century. A series of works of relocation, restructuring and expansion made after World War II have enriched its physiognomy and efficiency, bringing it to represent the natural economic opening of a significant part of the agricultural production of the Campania hinterland.

Salerno represented, in fact, the center of confluence not only for vast regions of its own province and that of Avellino, but also for part of Basilicata and Calabria. In 1959 the total area of the province of Salerno amounted to 492.258 hectares, of which 301.012 hectares of agricultural land and 137.193 hectares of forest surface,

while the uncultivated production and the surface destined for other use amounted to 54.054 hectares. In addition, 162,983 hectares were engaged in herbaceous crops and 91,221 hectares in grazing, while 137.193 hectares were destined for wood with varieties of wood for industrial use.

The immediate hinterland of the port of Salerno presented, after World War II, particularly encouraging data in various sectors. The canned food industry occupied the first place among the provincial industries and was almost totally localized in the municipalities of Salerno, Battipaglia, Pontecagnano, Montecorvino, Mercato San Severino, and in the municipalities of Agro Nocerino and Sarnese. In 1959 the fruit and vegetable production of Salerno, without considering that of the tomato, reached 6.271.000 quintals of vegetables and 1.827.000 quintals of fruit, foremost in the national export volume. As for the production of tomatoes, however, of the 5 million quintals produced in Campania, 3 million come from Salerno, with the crop of 12 thousand hectares on 23 thousand in total. These quantities were absorbed by 120 canning factories, export-oriented, who worked in the province of Salerno with a production of 1.200.000 quintals of peeled tomatoes in jars, 700 thousand quintals of concentrated tomatoes, 300 thousand quintals of fruit jams and 100 thousand vegetables in drums and jars. These quantities were exported abroad for 10 billion lire, for peeled tomatoes, 5 billion for concentrate and over 7 billion for preserved jams and vegetables. The canning industry also had a requirement of about 1500 tons of tin-plated bands, 20 thousand tons of coal and naphtha and about 25 thousand tons of sugar<sup>1</sup>. The same companies also played an important role in terms of employment, with 270 thousand employees during the year and 1.350.000 working units during peak periods, from July to September.

In the province there were also 13 large mills, with an annexed pasta factory, 40 smaller pasta factories and 600 artisan mills capable of processing about 2 million quintals of wheat a year. although

As for oil mills, there were over 600 plants in the Salerno area, most of them electric and about 200 medium-sized industrial plants<sup>2</sup>. The textile industry was represented by cotton mills and hemp plants. The cotton industry, in particular, was the most important and included the Southern Cottoneries Group with the three large factories in Nocera Inferiore for spinning, in Angri for weaving and in Fratte for

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\* Even though the two authors share the work setting, Valentina Sgro (PhD in Economic History at Department of Law, Economics, Management and Quantitative Methods - University of Sannio) wrote paragraphs 1 and 2, while Vittoria Ferrandino (Full Professor of Economic History at the same Department) wrote paragraph 3 and 4.

<sup>1</sup> M. Autuori, *Il problema del Porto di Salerno: suoi vari aspetti e sue soluzioni*, Tipi L. Jovine, Salerno p. 12

<sup>2</sup> The hemp industry was the least important, centralized in the municipality of Sarno, it comprised 6 establishments producing hemp fabrics and twine for shoemakers.

bleaching and printing. This important industrial complex absorbed around 3.000 workers.<sup>3</sup>

The wool industry included 7 factories, one of which, the most important, in Vietri sul Mare, one in Baronissi, one in Pellezzano, 4 in Polla, for the production of yarns and carded fabrics of considerable prestige and established on the major markets of national consumption.

The tanning industry also became more important in the province of Salerno. Two large tanneries carried out their activity in Torrione (Salerno), one in Nocera Inferiore and two in Pellezzano, mainly producing sole, natural cowhide and leathers for lining.

Furthermore, in the suburbs of Salerno, a cement plant, belonging to the Ital-Cementi group of Bergamo, was active, with a production of about 100 thousand quintals of cement per month. The brick industry, instead, was represented by five large factories, located in Salerno, Fratte, Montecorvino, Rovella, Agropoli and Casalvelino. Altogether they produced about 7 million full bricks per year, 5 million hollow bricks and 2 and a half million of Marseilles tiles, while the Salerno plant could also produce 11 million pieces per year between ceramics and majolica tiles.

Worthy of note is the Vietri sul Mare mechanical glassworks plant, unique in southern Italy, with a production capacity of over 120 thousand quintals of simple window glass.

In the province of Salerno there was not a large iron and steel industry, but a fair number of modest and well-equipped cast iron, bronze and copper foundries. The mechanical industry had an artisan form with the exception of the important plant in Salerno which employed 250 workers and produced complete plants for oil mills, hydraulic pumps and centrifuges.

The forest industry in the province of Salerno was very important. In addition to a significant quantity of coal, destined for the local needs and the market of Naples, there was a large processing of railway sleepers and an rich production of barrel staves that was exported to France, Algeria, Spain and Portugal, for about 30 thousand tons per year<sup>4</sup>.

During those years, especially for the canning factories, the direct importation on Salerno from England and the Common Market Countries started, for a quantity of 15 thousand tons of tinplate for cans. As for agriculture, a Montecatini plant in Pontecagnano for superphosphate imported phosphorite from Tunisia, and its

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<sup>3</sup> There were also, in the province of Salerno, three other cotton threads, of medium importance, in Fratte, Vietri sul Mare and in Pagani. The group of minor weavers of cotton consisted of 15 establishments, with a number of frames ranging from 14 to 207 each, mainly located in Cava dei Tirreni, Scafati, Nocera Inferiore and Pellezzano, (*Il problema del porto di Salerno, suoi vari aspetti e sue soluzioni di Michele Autuori, Consigliere comunale e del Comitato provinciale della Ricostruzione, Salerno, Tipografia Jovine, s.i.d., p. 13*).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p.15.

requirement for the port of Salerno marked a landing of about 10 thousand tons. The port facility in those years, therefore, underwent considerable growth and in 1959, also for the needs of the neighboring regions, the port of Salerno was chosen as the distribution base for Southern Italy of Eni and Edison fertilizers, for over 200 thousand quintals. The port was reached by several shipping lines from Genoa, Libya, East Africa, Northern Europe, as well as from the carts (tramps) of various sizes and from numerous motor-boats and sailing ships. The main trades consisted of coal, cereals, phosphates, pyrite, manganese; flours, pasta, various goods, as well as chestnut staves for Greece, France, Spain and Portugal and fir timber from Yugoslavia and Romania. The traffic of the port, already in the years 1938-39 and 1940 was about 200 thousand tons per year in the landings of merchant ships<sup>5</sup>.

## *2. The seaport activity during the second postwar period*

At the beginning of the Sixties the port traffic (with the prevalence of line traffic for the export of preserved products and the importation of coal) was around 250 ships of all capacities and up to 8000 tons, of different nationality. These quantities, however, according to what Michele Autuori wrote, were not acceptable. In fact, large plants in the geographic hinterland would have required a port capable of hosting ships loaded at 16.000 tons for the supply of coal from North America. Despite the considerable expansion of the port of Salerno, the considerable investment of nine billion lire, in 1957 by the Banco di Napoli and Isveimer for the industrialization of the entire province of Salerno and the positive economic consequences on the induced and local economic development, some large companies abandoned the province of Salerno. This is the case, for example of Saint Gobain who transferred the glass manufacturing plant in Caserta, or of the EMS that renounced imposing plants in Salerno, causing a loss in the maritime traffic of tens of thousands of tons of coal from the United States of America.

The need to increase the economic development of Salerno through the construction of the port had to face the difficulties of the southern question, as the Autuori writes: «I would like to draw the attention of those who are keen to prepare themselves in the political economy if, in the provision of hundreds and hundreds of billions of public expenditure, apart from the inorganic investments, agricultural and industrial, they have paused to evaluate the ports in the location, deepening its geographical function, as irreplaceable means of economic propulsion and, especially, industrial, for the part that are intended to operate. [...]When dealing with

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

the Mezzogiorno, the complex problem that arises from it, we cannot overlook the details of the center and, in the main lines, disinterested in the others, the marginal details».<sup>6</sup>

In a letter sent to all the mayors of the province of Salerno in June 1959, Autuori writes: «It is well known that the construction works of the port, in the approved 10-year project, has been suspended. [...]The port is fundamental for the development of our regions to urge the industrialization and a simple vote of the City Council for the resumption of work, returning to the southern question - by law ports belong to the State - would be very important for its solution»<sup>7</sup>. The commitment of Michele Autuori in the development of the port and the economy of his city repeatedly clashed with problems of a political and economic nature. «We have the precise sensation - Autuori writes - that despite our strategic position in the South, we must be subjected to the overlapping of subjective interests that tend to camouflage and devalue the huge patrimony from Providence bestowed that we would still be conditioned and reduced almost as if it were not a vital part of the nation and belonged instead to this or that region of sad fifteenth-century memory, which unfortunately would survive in the spirits of some interested registers. How to inspire trust in many controversies, underground, to believe you really want the progress of the good and laborious populations of Irpinia, Lucania and that part of Campania gravitating on Salerno?»<sup>8</sup>.

The port issue animated the local newspapers of the time. A few years before the completion of the works it was certain that Salerno would have had its port, not large but sufficient to the natural development of regional traffic, divided into tight competition, between the ports of Naples, Torre Annunziata, Castellammare di Stabia and Salerno. There was still much confusion, however, on the appropriate industrialization, a basic problem for the economic well-being of the entire province. The port under construction had to satisfy not only the sectoral needs of a commercial nature, but also interests related to the tourism sector. In the Mediterranean, there were still no ports suitable for the growing needs of tourist traffic, and the large ships that traveled far from the north to the south of Europe were steadily increasing. As Autuori suggested, «not to be underestimated, as far as the local economy is concerned, the possibility that can be widely offered for wintering, disarming, at this ship, in a comfortable and safe place, equipped for the maintenance of the engine equipment, painting of the hulls, etc. to which it can take back the sea, dressed up, as befits it, with *coquetterie* in the summer. And it is undeniable that a harbour would be

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<sup>6</sup> M. Autuori, *Il porto di Salerno nella questione meridionale*, Antica Stampa di Salerno, Salerno, 1959, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> M. Autuori, *Il retroterra salernitano. Dal Ponente al Levante (porto e industrializzazione)*, Salerno, 1962

<sup>8</sup> M. Autuori, *Industrializzazione del Mezzogiorno. Il retroterra salernitano*, in *La Marina Mercantile*, Fascicolo di Settembre 1960, Genova.

a strong incentive for a greater affluence of globetrotters, and a dynamic impulse to those initiatives that are hoped for. On the other hand, if it is true that civilization comes from the sea, it will result in a more rapid process of evolution of our environments, in contacts that would intensify with the peoples of the other countries.»<sup>9</sup>.

Among many controversies related to its location, only in the Seventies Salerno got the opportunity to have a fully usable commercial port. The new seaport gave back to the city that opening to the sea it had been deprived of, so much desired by Michele Autuori. Today the port of Salerno is back to being the bridge that links the city to the Mediterranean Sea and is one of the most dynamic production companies in the South.

In July 2010 in Lisbon, the port of Salerno has been named the best European port for goods and passengers handling compared to the available space. In addition, the European Commission expressed its appreciation for the level of safety of the Salerno airport and selected it, the only port in Italy, for a continental conference on port security, to present its Port Security Plan. The port of Salerno has also been chosen, with other 13 Italian port authorities, to take part in the Shanghai Expo 2010 with a multimedia stand set up by Assoport, Association of Italian Ports and in 2013 was included among the 319 European ports considered key from the European Union.

### 3. *A company and its territory: the «Agenzia Marittima Michele Autuori» in Salerno*

The creation of «a safe and grandiose seaport » means strengthening and economic development « and therefore the well-being of its neighboring regions », as already pointed out by Michele Autuori, born in 1900 and son of the founder, in 1871 founder, in 1871, of the «Agenzia marittima Michele Autuori»<sup>10</sup>, in one of his works written after World War II and dedicated to the port of Salerno and its relevance in international trade<sup>11</sup>. Michele Autuori was, in fact, one of the protagonists of the political and administrative life of the city of Salerno in the Fifties and Sixties, member of the City Council and the Council of the Chamber of Commerce of

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<sup>9</sup> M. Autuori, *Non un porto eccezionale, ma un porto sufficiente*, in M. Autuori, *Il retroterra salernitano. Dal Ponente al Levante (porto e industrializzazione)*, Salerno, 1962..

<sup>10</sup> Autuori company Archive (from now on AA), Camera di Commercio e Industria di Salerno, *Denuncia di esercizio individuale*, 5 giugno 1925.

<sup>11</sup> *Il problema del porto di Salerno, suoi vari aspetti e sue soluzioni di Michele Autuori, Consigliere comunale e del Comitato provinciale della Ricostruzione*, Salerno, Tipografia Jovine, s.i.d., pp. 9 e ss.; cfr. M. Autuori, *Il porto di Salerno nella questione meridionale*, Salerno, Tipografia Jovane; idem, *Il retroterra salernitano, Dal Ponente al Levante (porto e industrializzazione)*, Salerno, 1962.

Salerno. He highlighted the need to expand the city port and promoted instances also by the central government.

The sense of responsibility that characterizes the centenarian companies also comes out in the relationship with the territory of origin. Despite a strong openness to the outside world and the ability to explore new markets, the attachment of these companies to the native territory has always been very strong. They are engaged often in the promotion of many initiatives to promote the socio-economic development of the land of origin, thus underlining the sense of enterprise as a community<sup>12</sup>. It is not clear whether longevity is an obstacle or an impulse to the diffusion and development of innovation. In stable and long-lived companies, it is above all internal entrepreneurship that gives the necessary boost to innovation<sup>13</sup>.

Shipping companies in Italy are located mainly in the South and in the islands. In terms of size, they are generally larger than the average of other Italian companies and in many cases they are long-lived companies: in fact, most companies operating in the shipping sector are more than fifty years old. However, these are flanked by very young companies, founded less than ten years ago, which represent about 24% of the companies in the sector<sup>14</sup>. In particular, for long-lived companies, the connection between the effective survival capacity and their ability to innovate continuously is part of the genetic character; in order to face obsolescence and loss of competitiveness, these companies are looking for a continuous innovation, but always implemented respecting the original and developed activity with the final objective of improving the quality of the product or service offered<sup>15</sup>.

The attention for evolution has always characterized the Autuori company<sup>16</sup>, now Agent of «Grimaldi Group», which holds more than 50% of its capital. When

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<sup>12</sup> M.R. Napolitano, V. Marino, A. Riviezzo, A. Garofano, *Orientamento strategico e longevità nelle imprese familiari*, in V. Ferrandino, M.R. Napolitano, edited by, *Storia d'impresa e imprese storiche. Una visione diacronica*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2014, pp. 369 e ss.

<sup>13</sup> R. Faraci, *Un framework di riferimento per lo studio aziendalistico delle imprese longeve familiari*, in *ibidem*, p. 468. The economic literature, with the important contribution of Schumpeter, who theorized that innovation plays a key role for the survival of the company, stressed the importance of creating innovation through external entrepreneurship and new business (cfr. J. A. Schumpeter, *Teoria dello sviluppo economico*, ETAS, Milano, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Corbetta G., Minichilli A., Quarato F., *Focus sulle aziende di famiglia*, Milano, Osservatorio AIdAF, Unicredit Bocconi, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> E. Giarretta, *Vitalità e longevità d'impresa. L'esperienza delle aziende ultracentenarie*, Torino, Giappichelli editore, 2004, p. 59.

<sup>16</sup> The maritime agency «Michele Autuori s.r.l.» has marked the historical stages of trade in the Mediterranean and it is also one of the few historic companies in Salerno that participates to the project «I Centenari», an association that pit together only those companies from Campania that for at least one hundred years or three generations belong to the same family with Antonia Autuori as president, current CEO of the company. The authors thank her for her willingness to provide valuable documentation and information for the reconstruction of corporate events. Antonia Autuori, among other things, has been president of the «Salernostazionemarittima spa», a company formed by some port entrepreneurs, with the aim of qualifying the port of Salerno as a cruise port of international level and to insert it, fully, in the circuit of the most representative cruises in the Mediterranean. Currently, she is also a member of the Chamber of Commerce of Salerno and president of the *Fondazione di comunità Salernitana*

the company began to operate, the media were almost non-existent: in Salerno there was still no telegraph and radio, so the captains of the ships entrusted the load to people of trust in the ports in which they docked. Michele Autuori became one of the main figures linked to the maritime trade of the city of Salerno, also contributing to the development of the port activity. At the end of the nineteenth century, Michele began to deal mainly with the transport of pieces of railway, given the great development of the railway network, in addition to slats for the barrels and coal<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, as the area of Salerno was predominantly agricultural, the Autuori agency was also involved in the transport of pasta and peeled tomatoes in England and France, as well as citrus fruits, such as oranges and lemons, first with the crates and then with containers. Always at the end of the nineteenth century, he participated in the establishment of the company «Magazzini Generali» and became shipowner by launching the ship «Ildebrando da Soana».

By an act of the notary Giovanni Liguori of December 24, 1927, the company «Agenzia marittima di rappresentanza Michele Autuori e Figlio» was established by Michele Autuori, son of the late Ferdinando, born in Cetara, and Michele Autuori, son of the late Michele, born in Salerno on July 5th 1900, who was also Consul of Greece, with the mission «shipments and transports by sea and land by any means, rental and landfills, recruitment of navigation and insurance agencies and any other operation generally permitted by the laws relating to traffic and customs operations». The signature and the social representation was devolved separately to the two partners and, only for the exchange bonds and in general for the debt obligations assumed in any form, it was necessary to sign both partners to validly commit the company. With a later act by the notary Vittorio Manlio Giuliani in Salerno of February 24th 1939, the representation and the social signature belonged solely to Michele Autuori son of the late Michele. After the death of Michele Autuori son of the late Ferdinando, which took place on July 23, 1939, the sisters Elena, Bianca and Lucia Autuori had joined the company, together with his brother Michele Autuori son of the late Michele. Following Lucia's death, January 25, 1940, his share was inherited by his brother and sisters who, with an act of November 12, 1952, gave him their share, so Michel Autuori son of the late Michele became sole owner and signer of the Agency<sup>18</sup>.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, in particular with the landing of the allies, on September 9, 1943 in Salerno, there had been a significant increase in maritime traffic, as all the supplies for the American fleet passed through the Salerno

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<sup>17</sup> The ships that departed from the Salerno port began to transport the "Verzella", a ferrous material used to build the railway network (interview with President Ferdinando Autuori, [www.autuori.it](http://www.autuori.it)).

<sup>18</sup> AA, Camera di Commercio, Industria e Agricoltura di Salerno, Registro delle Ditte, *Certificato di iscrizione, Salerno, 15 marzo 1966*. . By the way, in 1940, the Agency expanded its activity with the transport of goods for third parties by trucks (AA, Provincial Council of the Corporations of Salerno, Report of modification and variations, January 23 1940).

port and Naples. In this period, a determining role was played by Michele Autuori when the company *Michele Autuori e Figlio* became « company for loading and unloading operations on behalf of the allies from October 10th 1943»<sup>19</sup>.

After the war, a group of local entrepreneurs, including Michele Autuori, began the redevelopment and enlargement of the Salerno port, which was now one of the cornerstones of local economic development<sup>20</sup>. The role played for migrants was also important. In April 1948, Michele Autuori informed the Chamber of Commerce and the Provincial Tourist Board of Salerno of having been chosen as Representatives for the Emigration and Passenger Service of the «Linea Costa» and of «Dodero», Argentine company for the South America line. The Agency assured « with a certain solicitude » departures to interested parties, thanks to its several ships « excellent in speed and treatment », with the addition, a few months later, of the third class Steamer «Giovanna C» with 1050 seats and at the passing price of 140,000 lire «*in camerone*», plus a supplement of 10,000 lire for each seat in cabins of 4 and 6 seats. The Agency's offices were equipped in order to «facilitate the passenger in every way», including the issuing of passports for the purpose of processing the related files<sup>21</sup>.

The turning point for the Agency took place only at the beginning of the Seventies, when Michele Autuori junior, a great car fan and race judge<sup>22</sup>, had the great intuition of starting to transport cars by sea, given the proximity to the «Arna» of Pomigliano d'Arco (a joint-venture between Alfa Romeo and Nissan Auto) and the establishment of the Fiat plants in Pomigliano and Cassino<sup>23</sup>. The company began to import car parts and export the assembled vehicles. In order to create a support area, the "Automar" was created, a company with a group of French shipowners, the Carline-Walon, owner of a back-port area in Pontecagnano. Here five tracks converged, through which loads of cars arrived to be finished, and then they were sent back to the port, where they were sorted on ships, to reach other places<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> AA, *Provincial Commercial Office of Salerno*, Salerno, April 18th 1945.

<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the «Star- Stabilimento alimentare Spa» plants, tra l'altro, made Salerno one of the main ports for the import of tuna. The Star company was founded in 1948 by Regolo Fossati in Muggiò, in Brianza ([www.star.it](http://www.star.it)).

<sup>21</sup> AA, *Telegram Michele Autuori & Figlio, Steam ship Agents, Spedizioni- Noleggi- Assicurazioni*, Salerno, April 9th 1949.

<sup>22</sup> In Salerno there was also a city circuit for car racing.

<sup>23</sup> Michele Autuori junior fu was also the first Ceo of Salerno airport and played a significant role in the *Associazione degli industriali di Salerno*, in *Associazione degli agenti marittimi nazionale* (FEDERAGENTI), and in *Associazione degli spedizionieri doganali*. He also promoted the establishment of the social security fund for sea and air agents (FAMA).

<sup>24</sup> Loffredo F., *Autuori, dalle arance alle auto*, [www.lacittadisalerno.gelocal.it](http://www.lacittadisalerno.gelocal.it), 2012.

#### *4. The new corporate structure: strategic choices and economic results*

In July 1995 Michele Autuori decided to constitute a new company Michele Autuori srl with 3 members Antonia Ferdinando and Lucia Autuori (the son and daughters) keeping for himself the usufruct, therefore the old unipersonal company Michele Autuori was ceased. A big 'step ahead' happened in march 1996 with the involvement of Grimaldi Group, already a very important customer of the agency, directly as shareholder of the company with a 40 % of the shares and with commitment of improving their traffics in Salerno with the new and innovative roro multipurpose vessels.

At the same time two other ship owners the Spanish Flota Suardiaz and the Norwegian UECC United European Car Carriers acquired another 15% each. The other 30% remained to the Autuori brothers. in the year 2008 Flota Suardiaz decided to sell their shares and the same did the UECC in 2012 having both lost their quotes of teaffic in the Mediterranean sea in favor of Grimaldi. Actually Grimaldi holds 57% and the Autuori the remaining 43.

With the new partnership in 1996, the elder daugther Antonia, with a degree in information science with more than 10 years experience in IBM became CEO of the company while the sister Lucia became commercial manager and Ferdinando was charged of the terminal operations. some years later in 2002, Michele, 66 years old, decide to leave the Presidency of the company and Ferdinando became the new President. In these years the 4th generation took the governance of the Company that had a big development increasing traffics, business and employees due also to the very important development of the Grimaldi Ship owner business that believed strongly in the potentiality of the Salerno Port system with the shipping agency, the port terminal 'SAT Salerno Autoterminal srl' and the external compound Automar spa in Pontecagnano.<sup>25</sup>

Of course difficult periods had to be faced in the past but also recently, When some car factories were closed after 2007 crisis the company was able to react with flexibility increasing the custom broker activities. All this is shown in the results of the business management that has improved the revenues up to nearly 4 millions euro without using any bank debts, meaning working with its own capital. These results confirm the special features of the centenary companies: a solid financial structure and a high grade of caution<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Grimaldi holds direct shareholdings in other companies: a 50% stake in S.A.T., Salerno Auto Terminal S.r.l. and another 10% stake in Grimaldi Terminal Euromed S.C.P.A., one of the most important companies of the Grimaldi group, active in maritime transport in Europe and in integrated logistics (our processing on AIDA database, year 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Our processing on AIDA database.

The strategic choice of the management of implementing certification systems has been very useful to improve the company performances and competitiveness.

The certifications achieved, in fact, have enabled the Autuori to face the market with a significant competitive advantage in terms of organizational planning and ability to meet customer needs. The "Michele Autuori srl", thanks to many years of experience in the field of maritime transport, has in fact obtained the ISO 9001 certificate, the best known and used standard for quality management systems, issued by Bureau Veritas, world leader in the control, verification and certification services for Quality, Health and Safety, Environment and Social Responsibility. Moreover, the Autuori was the second company in Italy to obtain another important certification in the field of customs: the certificate of A.E.O., Authorized Economic Operator, as customs agents and import / export operators. It allows economic operators to obtain advantages and facilitations of a direct and indirect nature, in relation to transactions with a customs importance. Recently, the company is proceeding to obtain further certification, the SA800. The SA (Social Accountability) 8000 standard, an international standard developed in 1997 by the American organization SAI, contains nine social requirements aimed at increasing the competitive capacity of those organizations that, voluntarily, provide a guarantee of the ethicality of their production chain and their own cycle productive. It is the first international standard that measures the ethical and social responsibility of a company, as in the case of the Autuori, which has always been committed to the defense of the territory in which it is located and in which it operates<sup>27</sup>.

In 144 years, the company has continually changed scenarios and has operated in increasingly competitive markets. The main factors of the longevity of this company were the ability to decide at the right time, and consequently the ability to recognize the opportunities that were presented; the careful choice of the staff and therefore the centrality of the person, the quality of the service provided to the client; the strong sense of social responsibility; the set of ethical values transmitted from generation to generation, together with the management's ability to control. Regarding this last aspect, although management has always been made up of family members, sharing the same objectives has allowed personal relationships between the family not to hamper working relationships. All this in a particularly difficult context such as the maritime one. The geoeconomic changes followed by globalization, in particular the delocalization of production by the main industrialized countries and the substantial increase in the weight of the Asian economies in international trade, have pushed the maritime transport sector to grow in a sustained manner.<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Cinque A., *I centenari e le aziende storiche di Salerno*, [www.positanonews.it](http://www.positanonews.it).

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. Panaro A. e Buonfanti, A., *Il settore dello shipping nel mediterraneo: i numeri della crisi e della "reazione"*, in *Studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno*, Napoli, 2013.

Competitiveness and sustainability are primary objectives for growth in the era of globalization, as well as investing in knowledge and training is a key to success.

Italy, with its over 8,000 kilometers of coastline, has an innate maritime vocation that involves the entire national socio-economic structure. The national cluster of the sea economy produces 2.7% of the GDP and employs over 500,000 workers with a prevalent localization in the disadvantaged areas of the country, ie the southern ones<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, it is transversal to the major issues of growth in the country, including: sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, employment, safety, quality of the Made in Italy product and the food supply chain, environmental quality and tourism.

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<sup>29</sup> Masini C., *Lavoro e Risparmio*, Torino, Utet, 1979, p. 413.