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Sommario/riassunto

Italy remains an enigma for many observers. Recent Social Trends in Italy, 1960-1995, the sixth volume from the international Comparative Charting of Social Change program, provides a new and convincing schema for its comprehension. It shows that three essential institutions have structured and unified Italian society: the family, the church, and political parties. While the state remains a weak institution, it is important as a regulator of the economy and of society through the welfare state. The book, which contains a long introduction by Alberto Martinelli on the uneven modernization of Italy, shows the usefulness of analysing social change through study of a series of macro-social trends. These trends range from life-style structures to fertility, leisure, consumption, inequality, religion, and family, among others. This sixth national profile provides more arguments in favour of a hypothesis of diversification, rather than convergence, of modern societies. As Henri Mendras writes in the preface of the book, "The more we change, the more we remain ourselves: that is the conclusion of our comparative research, and the Italian study provides further ample proof of it."
