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Abstracts

edited by Dorothy L. Zinn

Caterina Porcelli, Stefania Pontrandolfo

Towards a History of the Roma of Southern Italy: The Roma of Apulia

This essay offers a preliminary introduction to the history of the Roma of Southern Italy through a comparative analysis of two case studies regarding the communities of Carbonara (Bari province) and Laterza (Taranto province). The different historical events affecting the two communities from the period of sedentarization to the present day are reconstructed through the analysis of data from parish archives. These data permit an illustration of the modes of settlement of the two communities as well as the marital alliance strategies produced over time. More specifically, it is precisely the comparison between the marital strategies of the Roma of Carbonara and Laterza and those of the Roma of Cosenza that leads the Authors to raise significant questions regarding the current identity of Roma groups in Southern Italy: from the results of these initial investigations, they appear to hover between invisibility and disappearance.

Domenico Copertino

Processes of Making Heritage Out of Antiquity: The Valorization of the Old City of Damascus

In this article the Author discusses practices that make heritage out of the historical architecture of Damascus, as experienced by private actors, local authorities and transnational institutions like UNESCO. The analysis reveals how, by creating a “valuable” urban space that is imaginary and desirable, the valorization of heritage produces architectural objects that circulate as commodities in the market of cultural attractions. The investment of capital in the form of imagination, knowledge, relations and money in part takes the Old City away from its present-day inhabitants, transforming it into a site of tradition, the past, and consumption. While the exchange value of this space increases, attracting investors to the market for the redevelopment of “Arab houses”, the conditions are present for an exodus from this locale by those groups that are excluded from the valorization process.

Donato Martucci

A je burrë? Elements of a Representation

Like all forms of customary law, *Kanun* offers a connection between personal and collective identity. It represents a system of interpretation and values, and by adher-

ing to it an individual is integrated into his society and constructs his identity as one of its members. By examining *Kanun* sentences, the Author analyzes the *symbolic universe* in which the peoples who observe these customary law form their personal and collective identities. In particular, the concepts of *blood* and *honor* emerge as the foundational elements of such identity representations.

Rossella Piccinno

Mauritania: Library Cities in the Desert

Mauritania was, for many centuries, a center for cultural diffusion in which the acquisition and propagation of knowledge constituted an activity of fundamental importance. The historical vestiges of ancient cities such as Chinguetti, Ouadane, Tichit and Oualata are one of the visible expressions of this enormous cultural wealth. Situated in the heart of the western portion of the Sahara, these very ancient oases arose to serve the caravan routes connected with the great trans-Saharan commerce; they quickly became centers for religious instruction, where mosques and Koranic schools flourished whose undisputed fame reached distant Arabia. Presently, the wane in ancient commercial traffic and an unprecedented drought have caused the decline and progressive abandonment of these capitals in the Sahara. Here, the Author promotes their rediscovery and sounds an alarm for a civilization besieged by the desert.

Alessandra Guigoni

The introduction of Solanum tuberosum in Sardinia, Two Documents Published by the Royal Agricultural and Economic Society of Cagliari: Istruzione by Giuseppe Cossu and Memoria Coltivazione delle patate e loro usi particolari

This article discusses the characteristics of the introduction of *Solanum tuberosum* in the Sardinian system of food production and consumption, focusing in particular on some lesser-known historical sources: an *Istruzione* published by a Sardinian intellectual reformist, Giuseppe Cossu, and a *Memoria* published by the Reale Società Agraria ed Economica of Cagliari, an institution established by the King of Sardinia to discuss and promote agro-pastoral reform and the modernization of the island's economy and society.

Ernesto de Martino

Realism and Folklore in Italian Cinema

This brief article is presented here over fifty years after its original publication (in «Filmcritica», n. 19, December 1952) and on the occasion of the centennial of Ernesto de Martino's birth. In it, the author critiques the superficiality of certain cinematographic representations of the subaltern classes, in which lapses into the "weird" and the picturesque are the result of isolating folkloric phenomena from other aspect of the cultural life to which they are intimately linked. Basically, writes de Martino, the limits of these films dealing with peasants are to be explained by the distance between the people and intellectuals, and by the urbanocentric vision of the latter.

Guglielmo Zappatore

Among the Sufi in Amman: Pages from a Diary

The Author presents some pages from his field diary, which he wrote collecting memories, impressions and brief ethnographies during a trip through Jordan and Syria from March 25 to April 13, 2007, in which he sought to contact Sufi confraternities existing within these territories.

Valerio Bernardi

*De Martino, Philosophical Thought and Italian Cultural History:
Some Recent Studies on de Martino*

This article analyzes and discusses some of the more recent studies on Ernesto de Martino, in particular those focusing on the development of his thought and his interest in philosophy. From this investigation we see a de Martino who participated fully in the philosophical debates of his period, both in Italy and abroad, and a constant strand in his thought that underwent an evolution, yet maintained a coherent continuity.