

Folklore studies and ethnoanthropological research in Italy: 1960 - 1980*

The Italian experience represents a rather unusual chapter in the context of international studies and its presentation here is, consequently, not an easy task, especially since space does not allow any supporting reference to the related subject of Italian society and culture at large. In my outline of some of the trends emerging between 1960 and 1980, I shall be forced to operate a few – perhaps debatable – choices and, maybe, to overlook mentioning or examining authors and works otherwise worthy of every attention. A further problem in trying for an updating account is that the rhythm of research studies is always faster than that of the corresponding editorial production, so that is always a consequent gap of one or more years between the two processes. However, in order to offer reliable orientation, I shall only refer to the dates of published literature and not to the actual times of the various researches. Also, I shall give absolute priority to books and complete works, rather than to articles and essays, and to scientifically established scholars, rather than to those younger generations of scholars who are still in their formative years.

Most of the attention in this outline will go to folklore studies, which correspond to *Letteratura e Storia delle Tradizioni Popolari* (literature and history of folk traditions) in the teaching courses of our university system. However, since there is no complete correspondence between teaching and research fields, it often happens that cultural anthropologists and ethnologists (whose official teaching positions are here labelled, respectively, *Antropologia Culturale* and *Etnologia*) also deal with the field of folklore¹. In view of this, and also considering the increasing contacts among the above types of scholars, I shall also give a partial account of both ethnological and anthropological studies. It should here be added that, in order to stress the existing methodological and theoretical affinities among the various sectors, the all-inclusive term *demo-etno-antropologico* (demo-ethno-anthropological) has recently been coined (Cirese, 1967) to refer to the three disciplinary fields.

I.

The situation of Italian studies has undergone a great change – also in the institutional sense – since the years 1950 - 1960, a period which saw a first significant consolidation of these studies within the academic system. The picture was rather changed even in respect to the informative account published in 1967 on Ethnolo-

* I am grateful to my colleague Carla Bianco for translating my article into English.

¹ Owing to the well-establish communication potentials of the term folklore in international scholarship, I decided to use it here though contrary to my usual practice. In Italy, in fact, the use of the term demology (and its derivatives: demological, demologist, etc.) has become currently used and conceptually preferred by a considerable number of scholars.

gia Europea (Cirese, 1967). The change was due both to the inclusion of many teaching courses in Cultural Anthropology in the various academic programs, and to the increasing popularity gained by ethno-anthropological disciplines in general, from the late 1960s through the 1970s, even outside the university and scientific world. The outcome of this new interest was the appearance of a new class of scholars, characterized by different views and training, and in the birth of a series of non-academic initiatives (such as clubs and circles, non professional researchers, regional and local activities, like new museographic experiences, and so on). This multiform wave of undertakings produced a rich debate which also saw the participation of scholars from university circles.

It is here impossible to draw an exhaustive description of the wide range of structures – university chairs, centres and archives, museums, etc. – sponsoring or activating the above initiatives, of the amount of public investments engaged in the various sectors of research, and of the quantity of publishing forces involved. The overall size of this activity is still weak, if we compare it with more consolidated fields of scientific research. However, it is not at all insignificant and the trend has been constantly expanding in the last two decades. The present picture of the university operators in our field is rather difficult to describe. The new legislation (1980 - 1981) has assigned university scholars to three permanently held levels: the *professore ordinario* (to some extent equivalent to 'full professor'), the *professore aassociato* (literally, though not exactly corresponding to, 'associate professor'), and the *ricercatore* ('research fellow'); in addition, there is a new temporary position which has been established: the *professore a contratto* (contracted professor). The application of this new normative is still in progress and it is therefore too early to give a comprehensive picture of the distribution of scholars throughout our university system. My estimate, however, of the individuals officially enrolled in the teaching positions of the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines runs to a total of about 150, with an age span between 30 and 65, and a numerical distribution clearly showing the highest presence in the central and southern universities. To these should be added the significant number of extra-academic scholars and the large groups of local non-professional operators, mostly engaged in the sector of regional folklore. To this day, the system still lacks specific departments and schools for specialization in this field, which is still taught as part of other programmes, such as philosophical and sociological. Professional associations are also lacking, with the exception of the *Centro Italiano Di Antropologia Culturale (CIAC)*, which goes back to the heated discussions that marked the admission of anthropological teaching in our schools. I should also mention the existence of a few extra-academic national structures, such as the *Museo Nazionale Di Arti E Tradizioni Popolari* (National museum for popular arts and traditions) in Rome and the ethnomusicological and folkloric sections of the *Discoteca Di Stato*, also in Rome. Finally, besides some initiatives tending to consider folklore materials as part of the general programme for the protection of culture and environment, there is a whole network of local ethnographic museums, while the main public institutions for extra-European ethnography is the *Museo Pigorini* in Rome.

II.

Some of the traits characterizing Italian studies of the last twenty years can be summarized broadly as follows:

A) Great attention to and participation in the theoretical and ideological debate. Idealistic historicism, Gramsci's Marxist historicism, and theoretical Marxism (the latter since 1960's) have been the basic points of reference to approach – for confrontation or assimilation – different currents and schools: Russian-Czechoslovakian functionalism, French structuralism and semiotics, American cultural anthropology, and, to a lesser extent, British social anthropology. The importance attributed to theory is indicated by the frequent discussions about the meaning and the use of the concept of culture and on the relationship between culture and social class. Italian studies have been deeply affected by philosophical thought: first, they felt the impact of the idealism of B. Croce who as the most influential Italian philosopher of the first part of this century and of A. Gramsci's *Quaderni dal carcere*² (notes from prison). Then, more recently, they were concerned with theoretical Marxism, the Frankfurt school, phenomenology and existentialism, and finally, with the international controversy on epistemology of sciences. In the last few years, Italian positions and points of reference do not seem to have been different from those of the international debate.

B) The historical approach is widely considered as most relevant for at least three fields of research: the historical dynamics of the phenomena under investigation, that of the social groups and of the entire society, and the history of research. The last aspect is particularly relevant in Italy, where one finds an abundance of discussion and research on individual scholars and on phases of study. In the last twenty years, for example, the first decade of the post-war period (1947-57) has been intensely studied. That decade was significant for Italian culture at large because it was characterized both by continuity of previous traditions, and by a new trend of study which was politically connected with the left and with the movements of peasant and industrial workers. In particular, that trend of research was deeply influenced – as was most of the post-war Italian culture – by the publication in those same years of Gramsci's *Quaderni*. The historical approach has acquired great relevance in the scientific work of Ernesto De Martino, an ethnologist and historian of religions who has made a wide study of the folk traditions of the Italian South. Coming from a formative background of idealism and historicism, he did extensive field research and reached theoretical and philosophical positions which were partly influenced by existentialism and marxism. The recurrent attention dedicated to the history of our studies has pro-

² Among the many important aspects discussed in this famous work, is its specific interpretation and definition of folklore as the "cultural manifestations of subordinate classes". See also Cirese, 1976.

duced a specific literature which I think deserves mention in itself, and to allow possible checking and comparison with my presentation³.

C) The sector of empirical research is probably the least equipped with an established body of systematic and unified knowledge. The influence of idealism, which stretched from after World War I through the 1950s, has caused, along with the rejection of sociology and of empirical methods, the isolation of Italian studies from the great European sociological schools and has noticeably marked also the studies of the following years. Professional fieldwork activity has been limited to extra-European ethnology up till the 1950s, when E. De Martino started team fieldwork in Southern Italy. But even after that, there was no significant development in systematic recording and documenting methods, as the lack of specific literature on this subject readily shows. A certain improvement in collecting criteria started in the 1960s, with respect to the sound recording of folksongs, tales, and folk music in general.

Community studies, as well as monographs on villages, specific areas, and individual social groups, are still rarely practised by Italian scholars, while several researchers of Anglo-Saxon background have often conducted such studies in Italy, especially in the South. On the other hand, some field studies on urban and emigration problems have been accomplished in the 1960s and 1970s, but the initiative in those cases was always due to Italian scholars with direct experience or training in foreign universities (i.e., Tentori, 1972, Bianco 1966 and 1974, Signorelli 1977).

D) The published literature of the last twenty years mostly consists in historical and theoretical works, or in essays and articles dealing with the analysis of single culture traits⁴. Another recurrent form of publication consists in wide sur-

3 Of international fame in this connection was the recent article by V. Grottanelli, "Ethnology and/or Cultural Anthropology in Italy: Traditions and developments" in: *Current Anthropology*, 18, 4 (1977): 593-614, with comments by G. Ausenda, B. Bernardi, U. Bianchi, Y.M. Bodemann, J. Goody, A. Jablonko, D.I. Kertzer, V. Lanternari, A. Marazzi, L. Laurenich Minelli, D.M. Moss, H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, D. Pinto, P. Scotti, T. Tentori, and a reply by the author. Also outstanding in this connection were the following publications: V. Lanternari, "Le nuove scienze umane in Italia. Genesi e sviluppi" in: *Anthropologia e imperialismo* (Einaudi: Torino, 1974): 321-348; G. Angioni, "Alcuni aspetti della ricerca demologica in Italia nell'ultimo decennio" in *Folklore e antropologia*, edited by A.M. Cirese (Palumbo: Palermo 1972): 149-196; P.G. Solinas, "Il dibattito sull'antropologia culturale", op. cit., pp. 197-236; various articles on the two special issue of *Problemi del Socialismo* (nos. 15 and 16, both of 1979), in particular, T. Tentori, "Note e memorie per una discussione della impostazione dell'antropologia culturale in Italia negli anni '50" (no. 16, 1979): 95-122. For special studies on the fifties, see *Il dibattito sul folklore in Italia*, edited by P. Clemente, M.L. Meoni, M. Squillacioti (Edizioni di Cultura Popolare: Milan, 1976), containing essays written by the editors and anthological reproductions of important works. For a general history of Italian studies within the international research picture, see also G. Cocchiara *Storia del folklore in Europa* (Boringhieri: Torino 1972. First ed. 1952) and A.M. Cirese 1973. Among recent essays on the relationship between history and anthropology, see A. Rigoli *Magia e etnostoria* (Boringhieri: Torino, 1978).

4 This type of publication follows the traditional trend of empirical praxis dominating Italian studies, that is the collection of oral materials (proverbs, songs, tales, etc.) and of customs. A representative analysis of a single culture trait is that of A.M. Cirese "Note per una nuova indagine sugli strambotti delle origini romanze, della società quattro-cinquecentesca e della tradizione orale moderna", in: *Giornale Storico della Lingua Italiana*, CXLIV, 445-448 (1967): 1-54 and 491-566 respectively.

veys, based both on the historical analysis of data drawn from literature, and on field investigation⁵: most of these works aim at reaching theoretical interpretations of phenomena. The rapport with the field is not established following the Malinowskian tradition, but being considered only as a sort of testing opportunity, is characterized by short residence on the spot, repeated sessions, and sometimes by indirect means of recording data. The sector of extra-European ethnological studies shows a more sophisticated empirical tradition⁶. However, even this kind of research lacks a solid literature on field methodology. Some ethno-anthropological investigations are based on methods of quantification and measurement (questionnaires of sociological type) and are largely dedicated to the study of values (Tullio Altan 1974, Signorelli 1977, and others). There are also introductory manuals, mostly of a historical and theoretical character⁷. Among the latter, the work of A.M. Cirese, *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne* (Hegemonic culture and subordinate cultures) of 1973, has exerted a special function of orientation in the general scientific debate.

Journals are few and, in addition, no journal plays the role of central reference for the entire 'scientific community'. The only folklore journal of long tradition (since the 1900s) is *Lares*, published by Olschki in Florence, and presently directed by G.B. Bronzini, of the University of Bari. In the last decade, the Flaccovio Publisher of Palermo has issued a new journal largely based on semiotic approaches: *Uomo e cultura* (man and culture), directed by A. Buttitta of the University of Palermo. In those same years, another journal was started by F. Angeli, publisher in Milan: *L'Uomo* (man), a periodical especially dedicated to ethnology and directed by V. Grottanelli, of the University of Rome. Finally, *La ricerca folklorica* (folklore research) started its publications in Brescia for the Grafo Publ. Co., under the direction of C. Sanga. There is also a certain number of university bulletins and reviews of various kinds, such as the well-known *Bollettino del Repertorio e dell'Atlante Demologico Sardo* (Bulletin of the Repertoire and of the Sardinian Demological Atlas), BRADS, published by the University of Cagliari and directed by E. Delitala, besides other local and non-academic periodicals largely devoted to folklore-materials. In addition, many reviews and journals of disciplines other than anthropology often publish contributions from our field; among such periodicals is the highly qualified *Quaderni Storici*, published by Il Mulino of Bologna.

5 Some of De Martino's works can be mentioned here as examples: *Morte e pianto rituale: dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (death and ritual mourning: from ancient funeral lamentations to Mary's mourning) (Boringhieri: Torino, 1975. First ed. 1958) and *La Terra del Rimorso*, 1961.

6 See the bibliographical indications in the mentioned article by V. Grottanelli, 1977.

7 See, for example, B. Bernardi 1974, G. Bonomo, 1970, G.B. Bronzini, 1971, and C. Tullio Altan, 1971.

III. A brief outline of the 1960s

I am again forced to somehow simplify the picture and to limit my analysis to the new emerging trends. The sixties were mostly characterized by the controversial introduction of cultural anthropology (of American tradition) in the teaching system and by the discussion on French structuralism (especially on Lévi-Strauss).

A) The heated debate over the introduction of cultural anthropology started in the fifties with a first formulation of viewpoints and proposals mainly due to Tullio Tentori. That first statement was later expanded in a famous *Memorandum* and subscribed by numerous Italian scholars⁸. In 1962, the *First Conference on Cultural Anthropology* marked the addressing of much criticism to contemporary folklore and ethnological studies. The critics supported the inclusion of Cultural Anthropology in the academic teaching programmes as well as its role of total and all-inclusive science. According to that role, its purpose was to study culture (and subcultures) as a system of values and patterns, and concern itself with contemporary society and its transformations; finally, its necessary development would consist in a sort of applied praxis (applied anthropology) with implications of social planning.

Although still criticized from various parts, that first orientation is today a stable part of our studies and, while the term "Cultural Anthropology" has rapidly entered the university denomination system, the connection is being lost with some of the theoretical proposals of the "Memorandum". Further, the followers of that first approach and method have by now developed various theoretical differentiations and often choose marxism as a privileged point of reference and discussion.

The other relevant aspect of the period was represented by a special interest in structuralism and in French Culture in general. This diffused interest was accompanied by remarkable amount of translation. It must here be pointed out that the interest of various disciplines (i.e.: literature, philosophy, etc.) for structuralism came at a time in which Italian culture was most available for critical revisions and quite receptive towards new ideas. The debate that started in connection with structuralism became large enough to reach even the divulgative levels of popularity, whereby the critics (especially from the side of marxism and historicism) often accused the new approach of being just a fashion.

A "re-thinking" of the Russian-Czechoslovakian functionalism (Propp, Bogatyrev, Jakobson, Meletinski, Mukarovskij), and the penetration of French structu-

⁸ For a historical account of this event, see T. Tentori 1979.

ralism (especially, Lévi-Strauss, but also Barthes, Greimas, and others) have deeply influenced ethno-anthropological studies. Far from being definable as "fashion", they have profoundly affected, for example, the methods of studying oral traditions, as well as theoretical frames of references. Thus, folklore studies started referring to linguistics and to semiotics, in order to borrow scientific criteria that could partly replace the old philological and literary approaches of the folklore study of the XIX century.

B) Apart from the already mentioned new trends, there have been other deep, though less perceivable, processes: of continuity with the past, of interaction among various positions, as well as processes of slow adaptation and redefinition of problems and methods. Scholars of pre-war training, for example, were still fully operative in the sixties: they had absorbed the German and the British orientations (i.e. evolutionism and diffusionism), as well as the influence of Italian idealistic historicism. Folklorists of that age-group, such as Vittorio Santoli, Giuseppe Cocchiara, and Paolo Toschi, were writing some of their central works in the early sixties⁹ and the main institutional work in the field of ethnology (Grottanelli 1965) was published precisely in those years. Furthermore, most of the processes actually started in the 1950s continued and developed throughout the sixties, for example, the influence of Gramsci's thought and the folklorists' interest in establishing a rapport with the peasant and the proletarian movements.

In 1961 and in 1962, De Martino's last two important works were published. He considered structuralism as an anti-historical and irrationalistic tendency and, when he died in 1965, the controversy about that current had reached its highest peak; in the late seventies, when all his unpublished materials were issued (De Martino, 1977), his positions still represented a central occasion for comparison and discussion. Meanwhile, his theoretical and field research had variously influenced several folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and historians of religions (i.e. C. Gallini, A. Di Nola, D. Carpitella, L. Lombardi Satriani), and in many personal ways, these scholars continued (at least partially) to refer to De Martino for their subsequent research. Alberto M. Cirese, on the contrary, abandoning the historicist traditions, developed an original project of folklore study based on the following elements: a "social" definition of the field of study (the culture of the subordinate classes in correlation with different levels of the oral traditions, and an interest in epistemology and methodology which led him to seek a possible application of the methods of logic to demo-ethno-anthropological studies¹⁰. Diego Carpitella and Roberto Leydi, on the other hand, matured a theoretical

9 V. Santoli, *I canti popolari italiani: ricerche e questioni* (new enlarged edition, Sansoni: Firenze, 1968), G. Cocchiara, *L'eterno selvaggio* (Uomo e Cultura Testi: Palermo, 1972. First ed. 1961) and *Il mondo alla rovescia* (the world upside-down) (Einaudi: Torino, 1963), P. Toschi, *Arte popolare italiana* (Italian folk art) (C. Bestetti Editori d'arte: Roma, 1959).

10 For French readers, see A.M. Cirese, "Alterité et dénivellement culturels dans les sociétés dites supérieures" in: *Ethnologia Europaea*, I, 1 (1967): 12-30. For the application of logic, see A.M. Cirese, "Di alcune semi-logiche operazioni semiologiche" (of some semi-logical semiological operations), in: *Uomo e Cultura*, VIII-IX, 15-45.

definition of ethnomusicology that aimed at drawing a distinctive line between the old “literary” tradition of folklore studies and a new and independent discipline.

Toward the end of the sixties, there was a strong tendency to stress the political and cultural relevance in anthropological study. The discussion was about the relationship between ethnological research, on the one side, and colonialism and imperialism on the other. Within this framework, Lanternari continued the most original aspects of the historicistic tradition (in ethnology and in the history of the religions) with his dynamist and critical studies of the Third World¹¹. In the field of folklore, the specific aspect of the relationship between politics and research was developed by the joint activity of G. Bosio, the *Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano* (the new Italian song-book), and the Istituto Ernesto De Martino of Milan, a group whose programme was that of studying the “proletarian and popular world” and to contribute to a project of “self-emancipation of the proletariat”¹². Analogously, the writings of Luigi Lombardi Satriani supported the hypothesis of the “contestative value of folklore”, a much discussed theme during the seventies, in the general debate over the cultural life of the working classes and the phenomenon of revival (Lombardi Satriani 1968).

C) In this paragraph I refer to a random sample of texts which I find representative enough of the Italian trends of the sixties.

La Terra del Rimorso (the land of the remorseful bite: Il Saggiatore: Milano, 1961) by Ernesto De Martino is a historical-comparative research study of the cultural consequences of the ‘bite’ of mythological animals. After a thorough bibliographical survey and a period of group preparation, De Martino led a team of scholars to a field investigation of the phenomenon of *tarantismo* in Apulia. The latter implies a complex ritual by which the mythical bite of a *taranta* (tarantula) is followed by cycles of highly energetic therapeutical dances until physical exhaustion and the overcoming of the “crisis” ensue. The ritual dance is interpreted in this book as a collectively approved cultural answer – of a mythical quality – to the precarious life conditions of the southern peasant populations. De Martino’s aim was also that of accomplishing a sort of „religious history” of southern peasant society and of examining its relationship with the official Church. Further, he intended to bring Italian intellectuals to a sens of self-criticism of their

11 V. Lanternari 1960 and 1967 (a discussion of which is in the following pages). In his “Le nuove scienze in Italia” (see notes 3, 13), Lanternari attributes this tradition of study to the teaching of R. Pettazzoni, on the ethnology of religion, between 1920 and 1940’s. To this same tradition he attributes the formation of scholars like V. Grottanelli, E. Cerulli, T. Tentori.

12 This was a special research group whose original work dealt with the revival issues as well as with the new protest and militant song, with traditional and political discography, with empirical research, and with the publication of materials collected in the XIX and XX centuries. For a general picture of those activities, see some of G. Bosio’s essays published after his death in *L’intellettuale rovesciato* (Edizioni Bella Ciao: Milano, 1975).

past attitudes toward the problems of our South. The Italian word "*rimorso*" (remorse) refers, both to the repetitive character of the mythical bite (it comes back every year, in June), and to the sense of social guilt that ought to punish the intellectual elites).

A.M. Cirese's articles "Concenzioni de mondo, filosofia spontanea e i stinto di classe nelle 'Osservazioni sul folklore' di Antonio Gramsci" ("world views, spontaneous philosophy and class instinct in Gramsci's 'Observations on folklore'", originally written in 1969 and republished in *Intellettuali, folklore e istinto di classe*, 1976), beside touching upon the political use of folklore, mainly applies a 'structuralist' technique in analysing Gramsci's pages, in order to establish the folklore pertinence of the "Observations". Folklore is thus interpreted as the entire set of "worldviews and life concepts of the subordinate classes", in a given relationship with the hegemonic culture, and within the framework of "different levels of culture".

In *Occidente e Terzo Mondo* (Western and Third World), Vittorio Lanternari does a systematic and critical survey of ethno-anthropological studies on the Third World. From a historical and comparative perspective, he analyses the relationship existing, in ethnological societies, between traditional local religions and the great western religions. Previously, he had studied messianic and religious movements as political and social expressions and as vehicles of social transformations. *Occidente e Terzo Mondo* completes those studies, besides continuing and developing the Italian tradition and Pettazzoni's historical-religious school. From an international perspective, Lanternari's original approach is not too far from the "dynamistic" positions of P. Worsley and G. Balandier.

As for the remaining orientations of Italian Cultural Anthropology in the sixties, it is useful to refer to the papers of the 1st National Conference of Cultural Anthropology (Milan 1962), published in that same year in issue 3 and 4 of the journal *Il Pensiero Critico*.

IV. A Brief Sketch of the Seventies

The various discussions and new attitudes of the previous decade noticeably reduced the gap between Italian studies and the international scientific community. The work of the latter became better known here also thanks to the publication of a large and diversified range of essays. The development of Italian studies, however, continued to show certain original traits and attitudes which I think deserve mention. Among other things, it must be said that the influence of the 1968 student movements has somehow contributed to force our studies to seek an intellectual renovation.

A survey of the literature shows the following emerging aspects: a continued relationship between anthropology and marxism; a relationship between academic research, on the one hand, and social and institutional aspects of local territories, on the other (i.e.: social organizations, regional and provincial administrations, cultural circles of various kinds, etc.); the relationship between demoethno-anthropological studies and other disciplines (in particular, the special interest showed by some historians toward our field, but also the emergence of more articulated inter-disciplinary attitudes, including an increasing exchange of experience among the various sectors of anthropology).

A) It may be surprising that, although a partial influence of Gramsci's writings and the consequent search for contacts with the workers' movement had started as early as the late forties, the actual debate on anthropology and marxism only 'emerged' in the seventies. A possible explanation is that, up to the sixties theoretical marxism had been read in Italy through the lens of historicism; the latter, a form often labelled as 'integral historicism', had mostly operated within the classic fields of humanities, such as history, literary, artistic and historical criticism, and so on. Folklore studies – or portions of them – had thus considered Gramsci (who was still, though polemically, tied to Croce's idealism) one of their points of reference. However, they had not directly referred to Marx or to the theoretical development of marxism. Among other things, it may also be that the impact of structuralism and the far-reaching ambitions of Cultural Anthropology acted as a more important factor toward a direct rapport with theoretical marxism, than with ideological and historical conceptual references. It is a matter of fact, however, that an open-minded and non-dogmatic interest for theoretical marxism only started in the sixties, with the appearance of several philosophical schools and with waves or "re-readings" (often non orthodox), which were in open polemic with the tradition of the Third International and with the historicistic mediation and interpretation. In anthropological studies, the previous attitudes clearly produced the intensive interest for German and French marxism (i.e.: Althusser, Godelier, and the 'Frankfurt School'). Another factor is to be found in the political climate of the late sixties and early seventies, in which a strong electoral gaining of the left also produced expectations of positive changes for the potentials of knowledge and encouraged a practical commitment of the scholars in the problems of culture organization.

In 1974 in Florence and in 1977 in Milan, a series of meetings among specialists opened a systematic discussion of the relationship between marxism and anthropological studies. Those meetings were sponsored by cultural institutions belonging to areas of the political left, such as the Istituto Gramsci and the Fondazione Feltrinelli. In 1979, two special issues of the journal *Problemi del Socialismo* (nos. 15 and 16) were entirely dedicated to the theme "Marxist orientations and Italian Anthropological Studies". There is an important difference between the earlier initiatives (of Florence and of Milan) and the journal issues of 1979, which show a

change in the intellectual milieu. The first two meetings established general comparisons between common anthropological trends and marxist theory in general, while the 1979 essays examined more specific themes: marxism and economic anthropology, problems of "subjectivity", evaluation of the history of studies, and so on¹³. This means, of course, that a step ahead had been taken with respect to the earlier levels of discussion, that is to say, a deeper awareness had been acquired of the relationship between problems of anthropological research and theoretical patterns of reference.

A similar development can be traced for the anthropological practice applied to territorial cultural policies: i. e., relationships with local institutions, problems of the social use of folk culture (or folklore), and so on. These themes have mainly involved the participation of folklorists cultural anthropologists, and scholars from other disciplines, such as linguistics and dialectology (especially if applied to educational programme).

The mid-sixties had already presented some early initiatives of "reproposals" (revival) of folk culture aiming at enhancing political and social awareness. It had been a sort of peculiar folk revival, characterized by a marked tendency toward themes of political struggle. That previous phenomenon, however, had been limited to a function of "avant-garde" and only involved restricted groups and individual scholars. In the seventies, it acquired wider proportions with a large presence of cultural clubs, circles, and revival groups. Many scholars became deeply involved in the cultural problems of single territories and regions, while a veritable mass of non-specialists also started operating a large scale field collection of folk traditions. Folklore became widely present in popular discography and in the media in general. Although this phenomenon was often judged as a "misleading fashion", it undoubtedly produced a noticeable effect of revitalization – especially in peripheral areas – of entire bodies of traditions, customs, and expressive forms which had seemed to disappear in the sixties, under the devastating influence of consumerism.

13 I think it may be of interest to give a description of the contents of these two special issues:

no. 15: P.G. Solinas, "L'antropologia come storia naturale del profitto. Critica dell'economia neoclassica in antropologia"; C. Pasquinelli, "Simmetrie tra antropologia culturale e marxismo. Itinerari di un confronto in Italia e in Francia"; T. Seppilli, "Neutralità e oggettività nelle scienze sociali. Linee per una riflessione critica sul rapporto fra conoscenza e prassi"; A.M. Cirese, "Note provvisorie su segnicità, fabrilità, procreazione e primato delle infrastrutture"; P. Clemente, "Dislivelli di cultura e studi demologici italiani"; G. Angioni, "Tre riflessioni ed una premessa autocritica su cultura e cultura popolare"; V. Padiglione, "Osservatore e osservato: problemi di conoscenza e rappresentazione. La vicenda Scotellaro"; C. Gallini, "Note su De Martino e l'etno-centrismo critico". The overall title of number 15 is: Orientamenti marxisti e studi antropologici italiani: Problemi e dibattiti. Part. II. It contains the following contributions: A.M. Sobrero, "Problemi di ricostruzione della mentalità subalterna: Letteratura e circolazione culturale alla fine dell' 800"; L. Lombardi Satriani, "Realtà meridionale e conoscenza demologica. Linee per una storia degli studi demologici degli anni postunitari alla conquista della Libia"; S. Puccini e M. Squillacciotti, "Per una prima ricostruzione critico-bibliografica degli studi demo-etnoantropologici italiani nel periodo fra le due guerre"; T. Tentori, "Note e memorie per una discussione sulla impostazione dell'antropologia culturale in Italia negli anni '50"; V. Lanternari, "Le scienze religiose in Italia e la prospettiva storico-antropologica"; F. Aperi, "Marxismo, antropologia, scienze sociali, di sinistra: Note su un dibattito italiano".

Within the above tendency, one can distinguish two dominating themes: Firstly the socio-political value of folklore (regardless of its progressive quality). Secondly an urgent demand for wider documentation and a policy of protection of traditional materials (viewed as "cultural goods"), to be destined for public use. In 1975, the value of folklore was actually the theme of a passionate debate, in newspapers, magazines and journals, mainly due to the ideal initiative of Luigi Lombardi Satriani. In a short volume with the significant title of *Folklore and Profit* (1973), he had denounced the tendency of the mass media and the dominant classes to edulcorate and to exploit some aspects of folklore, in order to eliminate (or to hide) its most oppositional and antagonistic potentials and identity. He went as far as to speak of the ethnocide of a southern Italian culture which was resisting capitalism. The second theme, that of a demand for documentation and protection of the "cultural goods", found its expression in the great development of local museography, in the opening of study centres sponsored by municipalities, and in the recurrent discussion over the methods of recording, cataloguing and archiving traditional materials (both sounds and objects). The end result, a strengthened interest in the methods for the study of folkways, is reflected in the numerous conferences, publications and national initiatives¹⁴.

B) For a better understanding of the seventies, the aspects already indicated as "emerging" should be considered in correlation with other tendencies, more profound and systematic, which actually represented a substantial continuity of the sixties. In 1973, Alberto M. Cirese published *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne* (see above). This book contained an important synthesis of Italian demological studies¹⁵ and contributed considerably to a conceptual systematization of that field of research by offering a highly organized network of theoretical and methodological information. Further, having considered folklore studies within the wider framework of ethno-anthropological research, his work also contributed to a closer rapport among folklore study, ethnology, and cultural anthropology. As already mentioned, Cirese's definition of folklore as subordinate culture is based on Gramsci's concept of the relationship between culture and social classes. His choices and proposals have been often criticized, especially in recent

14 Among the initiatives on a national scale, is the interesting proposal for special forms of folklore collection (on music, material culture, ceremonies, etc.), jointly sponsored by the Istituto Nazionale per il Catalogo and by the Museo Nazionale di Arti e Tradizioni Popolari of Rome. A group of scholars, among whom D. Carpitella, J. Recupero, and A. Rossi, edited this methodological material which was published as *Ricerca e catalogazione della cultura popolare* (De Luca: Roma, 1978). On a regional level, the activity of the Regione Lombardia has been particularly important, under the direction of R. Leydi, with the publication of a series of monograph studies and collections and the establishing of discographic serials of folk music and songs. As it refers to museographic problems, see A.M. Cirese, 1977.

15 For the English reader, see also Cirese, 1974. It is the only comprehensive essay in the English language, dealing with Italian folklore studies: history, methods, theories, collections, bibliography. It had been written, as early as 1969, for a special issue of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, of Indiana University, edited by C. Bianco and also containing essays by D. Carpitella (the only outline in the English language of Italian ethnomusicological studies), L. Lombardi Satriani (folklore as "culture of contestation"), and by G. Cocchiara (on G. Pitre). Various editorial factors delayed the actual publication of that issue until 1974.

times, but nevertheless, his approaches remain among the most stimulating and systematic accomplishments of the last twenty years.

Other aspects characterizing the period were the publication of many ethnological studies aiming at a radical criticism of the colonialistic origins of anthropology (see, for example, Lanternari, 1974, and Cerulli, 1977); a resumption of research activities in extra-European areas, especially in Latin America; a deeper involvement in economic anthropology (Solinas 1977) often with the contribution of historians (Grendi 1972); and finally, approaches to British social anthropology – filtered through Italian philosophical positions – supported by B. Bernardi (1974). The theoretical correlation between structural-functionalism and French marxism (Althusser) also stimulated folklore studies toward a certain renewal. This was reflected in two studies on Sardinia both of which stressed from different angles the causal priority of “relations of production”, the first (Gallini 1973) in the analysis of the evil eye, and the second (Angioni 1974) in the study of the social stratification of a peasant area. Though not following Malinowski’s fieldwork criteria, those two works have also given a significant contribution to theoretical study applied to field observation.

A tendency to apply the results of semiotic and linguistic research to ethno-anthropological study is reflected in works which supported a concept of “oral mentality” (Carpitella 1973), or in wider projects of theoretical cooperation between semiotics and anthropology, mostly through the application of Greimas (Buttitta 1979). Further, the field of ethno-linguistics appeared for the first time in that period (Cardona 1976).

The seventies also produced important studies on Italian society and its changing processes, as well as on the social use of research data, especially by means of anthropological inquiries based on quantitative methods – very close to sociological approaches (Tentori 1972, Tullio Altan 1974, Signorelli 1977).

C) Dealing with a recent period, I find it less easy (than for the sixties) to propose a series of sufficiently representative books. I shall therefore use another point of reference, equally revealing for the scientific climate of those years: a brief survey of the most significant conferences and meetings.

The first national congress of ethnomusicology (*Congresso Nazionale di Etnomusicologia*, Roma 1973) marked the accomplished autonomy of this discipline and started a lively debate among ethnomusicologists, folklorists, anthropologists, music historians, and musicologists. Its prevailing trends were orientated toward theories of linguistics, with special reference to East-european functionalism (Carpitella 1975). In 1974, there was a conference in Palermo with the title of *Magia come segno e come conflitto* (magic as sign and as struggle). The importance of this event becomes clear if one considers how the surviving interest in J. Frazer, on

the one hand, and De Martino's work on the other hand influenced Italian research on the subject of magic. Apart from important contributions based on historical (Bonomo) and on political approaches (Lombardi Satriani), semiotic methodology (Todorov, Buttitta, Miceli) was the dominant theme of that conference which saw the participation of folklorists, anthropologists, and linguists (Buttitta 1979).

In 1976 a conference took place in Bologna on the subject *Fonti orali: tra antropologia e storia* (oral sources: between anthropology and history). The theme, long familiar to demological and anthropological study, was at that time being re-proposed for discussion by the 'oral' historians of contemporary society and by specialists in African history. The conference sponsored by historians and anthropologists, with the contribution of linguists and folklorists, stimulated an interdisciplinary improvement of methods and more sophisticated approaches to the problem of subjectivity in oral sources (Bernardi, Poni, Triulzi 1978). In 1978, an international meeting of Sicilian anthropology in Palermo discussed the theme *La cultura materiale in Sicilia* (material culture in Sicily). Museographical and agricultural studies, which had started a few years before, gained new strength with this conference which also reinforced a general interest for crafts and other folkways of the working classes. Participants came from the sectors of anthropology, folklore, history, linguistics, and dialectology, and the themes approached forces, relations, and means of production – were largely inspired by marxism and by semiotics (*Cultura materiale in Sicilia* 1980). Also in 1978, an important international conference, held in Montecatini, Tuscany, attempted to achieve systematic cooperation between anthropologists (of various specifications) and 'pure' semioticians. The common theme under discussion was *Forme e pratiche della festa* (forms and practice of festive phenomena) which received scientific contributions from all over the world. As the first of its kind – both in Italy or elsewhere the conference has marked a meaningful moment of necessary reflection over descriptive and analytical methods for the study of ceremonial events (Bianco, Del Ninno, 1981).

Another important meeting was held in 1979 in Parma, on the very popular theme of folk narrative, *Tutto è fiaba* (everything is folktale) 1980. The event was an opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange on issues of common interest (such as methods of structural analysis, psychoanalytical approaches, and so on) among specialists of folklore, literature, and philology. Finally, 1979 was also the year of another international meeting, sponsored by ethnologists, on the theme *La ricerca sul terreno* (fieldwork). It was the first Italian initiative for a discussion on field problems and empirical research and it sanctioned a common area for ethnology, folklore, and cultural anthropology, all of which were widely represented there by scholars from many countries. The dominant motif was the urgent necessity for a systematic consideration of the methods and issues of empirical research (*Ricerca sul terreno* 1980).

Although the above survey could only mention a few of the most important meetings of the last decade, its overall informative potentials ought to be quite reliable. Italy does not have professional societies or analogous disciplinary organizations, whose yearly official congresses would automatically produce a public account of scientific activities, tendencies, and projects. Therefore, I decided to refer to the Italian tradition of thematic conferences and meetings in order to offer this brief survey of scientific moods, styles, tendencies, and theoretical preoccupations of the present and, maybe, also of the near future.

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