

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

A la Moda dai Salamun

Tourism, Experience and Identity in an Italian Alpine Village

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Social Anthropology

at Massey University

Keith Ridler

1998

*For Jude
and for our children
Maryse Pablo Antonio*

ABSTRACT

The people of the European Alps have been the focus of considerable ethnographic research since the late nineteen fifties. During the same period, their cultures have been profoundly transformed by the influence of rapidly developing mass-tourism. Studies in Alpine ethnography have generally taken one of two theoretical approaches, either examining the histories and cultures of mountain-dwelling peoples as ecological adaptations to a marginal ecological environment, or examining their historical situation as one of political and economic “dependency”. Research from both perspectives has tended to ignore tourism as a central focus of inquiry. When studies have addressed tourism and its impacts, researchers have generally neglected the existential dimensions of the experience of change, focusing more commonly on structural effects.

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that the major cultural impact of tourism from the perspective of the people of Salamone, a heavily touristed village in the Italian Alps, has been a pervasive process of “cultural disenchantment”. Tourism, along with other cultural forces at play in contemporary Italian society has, in the view of Salamonesi themselves, alienated them from a sense of the past and from local traditions. My study explores the means by which the members of this community act to recover historical experience and a sense of place, and adopt historical idioms of expression to both display identity and boundary it from what they perceive as the culturally homogenising effects of the tourist presence.

From a perspective grounded in existential and phenomenological anthropology, I focus on three modes by which historical experience is constituted; historical *inscription* of the landscape and village space; *ethnomimetic enactments* of historical roles and behaviours; and lastly, the *poetics of social interaction* with tourists and other villagers. I argue that these modes provide common forms of expression within which individuals make complex and sometimes contradictory statements about who they are, how they perceive contemporary realities, and how they imagine the cultural and political future in a rapidly unifying Europe.

The experience of long-term fieldwork and a prolonged personal engagement with Salamonesi have also opened the possibility of a sustained reflection on the nature of ethnographic inquiry and fieldwork practice. This reflection is the second major theme of this study. Just as Salamonesi “take up” what is given to them by history and transform its meaning through practical means, I argue that practical experience and embodied knowledge lead us to recast our assumptions about the relationship between theory and experience, and the nature and intent of anthropological understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since I first visited Salamone nearly twenty years ago, I have incurred many debts, both personal and professional. The most important one is to the Salamonesi who, as a community and as individuals, have with extraordinary generosity helped this work in every way possible. With astonishing social grace they have repeatedly accepted me, my wife and our children into their community and lives, and have had to wait a long time for this result. Many have come into the world and some left it since my fieldwork began: I want to acknowledge the memories of some who gave great help in the early days - Narcisso and Margheritta Salvadei, Giovanna Polla, Angelo Polla. Over the years there have been too many acts of kindness over the years to acknowledge all the individuals responsible, but I want particularly to thank Maurizio and Miriam Polla for their friendship and support of this research. Others who have hospitably allowed it, and us, to disrupt their lives, and who I wish to especially thank for it, include Diego and Theresa Amadei; Lucio, Anna and Lorenzo Mosca; Livio and Iole Polla; Gianfranco Polla; and Luciano Mosca who both at the *Municipio* and as a friend has at times gone to great lengths to help. I owe a special debt to Celeste Lorenzi for his longstanding encouragement. The *Comune of Salamone* deserves my heartfelt thanks for the openness and generosity with which they allowed me to roam through their archives, make use of their current records and facilities, and, perhaps most importantly, many times smoothed the bureaucratic difficulties of a *straniero* and his family in Italy. Guido Bemporad and Costanza Vincenti, both in Salamone and elsewhere, have shared ideas, food and innumerable conversations and provided concrete help on many occasions. I have repayed the consideration of people in Salamone by doing something many might not have wished: concealing their names and the names of local places behind pseudonyms. I hope those who would rather I hadn't will forgive this academic necessity.

Professionally, too, many people have supported this research, shared their knowledge, or responded to requests for comment on my work. Foremost is Michael Jackson, whose deep friendship, and the influence of his thought and work as an anthropologist and writer, permeate this work. Jeff Sissons, my Chief Supervisor, has also been a constant source of encouragement and intellectual stimulus, and an invaluable font of practical assistance through some very hard times. I would like to thank too my colleagues in the Department of Social Anthropology at Massey University, and my students over the years, for their interest in this project, and the many ways in which they have opened up new avenues of vision. Thanks are also due to Nicola Collins, our Departmental Secretary, for her assistance throughout. I also acknowledge the financial assistance on several fieldtrips of Massey University under its Overseas Leave and Special Leave provisions, and the Massey University Research Fund for a generous grant to carry out fieldwork in 1986-87.

In Italy, I owe an immense debt to Antonio Marazzi, Chair of Anthropology in the *Dipartimento di Psicologia Generale* at the University of Padova for his personal encouragement, for providing an academic base over the years, and for his invitation to be a visiting *Professore Incaricato* in 1990 and Visiting Fellow in 1995. Thanks also to colleagues in that department for their interest in the project and stimulating exchanges.

In the Val Rendena, the *Ufficio Tecnico del Comprensorio C.8 (Giudicarie)* has provided much support and information, including the series of maps of Salamone which appear in this work. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, who provided funds for my first fieldwork under a Postgraduate Scholarship.

A considerable amount of the work in this thesis was done as a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University, Bloomington in 1995. Being there was a revelatory experience in many ways and an enjoyable and productive one. I would like to thank that Department for providing such a congenial home. On the Bloomington campus, I would like to thank Bob Orsi for his wonderful company and comments on parts of the manuscript, Rick Wilk for some stimulating leads on tourism, and Henry Glassie for a memorable conversation on the nature of friendship and for sharing his work on Ballymenone.

The physical preparation of a thesis is an onerous task and I owe a special debt to Robyn Walker for assuming some of the burden at the end in helping to deal with the manuscript, maps and photographs. This was a true act of friendship which I hope to be able to reciprocate in kind.

I have left the deepest debt for last. This is to my wife, Judith Loveridge, who - since the second trip - has shared the fieldwork, thoughts, and experience. She has illuminated many aspects of life, here as in Salamone.

A Note on Publication

An earlier version of Chapter Eight has appeared as Ridler (1995).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Maps & Illustrations

Introduction 1

-The Structure and Intent of this Study

Part One: Theory and Experience

Chapter One: Alpine Ethnography, Tourism Studies and Local Experience 7

-A Brief History of Alpine Ethnography

-Avenues of Vision on Tourism

-Conclusion: For an Experiential Approach to Alpine Ethnography

Part Two: Inscription

Chapter Two: Landscape, Memory, Inscription 34

-Modes of Historical Experience

-The Inscription of the Landscape

-Conclusion: Inscription, Spatiality and Social Boundaries

Chapter Three: The Space of the Village as Mnemonic 51

-Walking Through Circles

-Architectural Inscription

-Mnemonic Interiors

-Conclusion: Dual Inscriptions

Part Three: Ethnomimesis

Chapter Four: Ethnomimetic Enactments: Public Feste 77

-Ethnomimetic Enactment

-Ethnomimesis and Public Ritual

-Religious *Feste*: Processions and the Possession of the Village

-Fêting the Tourists, Stealing a Cheese

-Conclusion: Public *Feste* and the Strategic Management of Ambivalence

Chapter Five: “Closed” Circles (?): Ethnomimesis and the Politics of Cultural Revitalisation 100

- Framing the Contrast: A Cultural Activists View
- Two Contrasting Associations
- Conclusion: Ethnomimeis, Historical Totalisation and “Systems of Difference”

Part Four: Poetics

Chapter Six: Poetics, Locality, Social Equivalence 122

- Poetics as Multiply Situated Action
- Food: Constrastive Connotations of Locality and Identity
- Pino’s *Festa*: “Social Grace”, Boundaries, Equivalence
- Alla Moda dai Salaumun*: Irony and the Impoverished Past
- Spilt Wine: Abundance and Waste
- Poetics of Interaction as Politics of Cultural Resistance
- Conclusion: Poetics and the Possession of History

Part Five: Cultural Disenchantment and the Force of Memory

Chapter Seven: Cultural Disenchantment, Modes of Historical Experience and Strategic Retreats 148

- Cultural Disenchantment and Temporality
- Worker-Peasantries, Contemporary Tourism and the Sense of History
- Re-enchantment: Modes of Historical Experience and Cultural Intimacy
- Cultural Intimacy, Cultural Stereotypes and “Hermeneutic Depth”
- Conclusion: Structural Nostalgia?

Chapter Eight: If Not the Words: Friendship, Shared Experience and Anthropological Inquiry 162

- Two First Encounters
- The “Natural Standpoint” and Its Ironic Suspension
- “Resonance” and Mutuality
- The Practical Space of Friendship
- Empathy, Memory, Revelation: Two Moments of Being Led
- About Revelation: An Indeterminate Conclusion

Bibliography 182

LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Maps

1. Modern Italy (follows p.6).
2. Italy's northern frontiers (follows p.6).
3. Salamone: historical growth 1950-1992 series (follows p.50)

Illustrations

Salamone from the Southwest 1957 (follows p.6)

Salamone from the Southwest 1992 (follows p.42)

Monte at Gablan 1985 (follows p.42)

Malga at Doss 1987 (follows p.42)

Walking Through Circles series (follows p.57)

Tourist Housing 1995

Central *Piazza* 1995

Crossing the main street: tourist season 1995

Centro Storico 1995 (i)(ii)(iii)

Procession for San Giuliano series (follows p.99)

Procession for San Giuliano (i)(ii)

The *Banda di Salamone* (i)(ii)

Schützen Marching (i)(ii)

Men at a *Monte* 1995 (follows p.135)

Giulio Tolei's Mural 1995 (follows p.159)

Augusto and Francesca (follows p.176)