

## *Lares*: A Journal in the History of Italian Anthropology

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*Lares* is the oldest, still-running anthropological journal in Italy [1]. It was founded in 1912 and has been published with only two hiatuses to date, during the World Wars. Summarising its history therefore entails a retracing of critical stages in Italian demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines, particularly around studies of folklore and popular traditions; these have been, until recently, the main focus of the journal. In this essay, I will try to tell *Lares'* history by dividing it into five phases. Each reflects, to some extent, the personality and intellectual orientation of the scholars who have in turn fulfilled the editor's role: 1) the positivist and pre-Great War period of the journal's foundation (1912-1914); the fascist period (1930-1943); The post-Second World War or "folkloric" period (1948-1973); the "demological" period (1974-2003); the anthropological and cultural heritage period (recent years).

### 1. *Lares'* foundation and the positivist phase

*Lares* was founded in 1912 as *Bullettino della Società di etnografia italiana* (Bulletin of the Italian Ethnographic Society). The Ethnographic Society was in turn created following the organisation in Rome of an Exhibition of Regional Ethnography in 1911 and a related Congress of Italian Ethnography. Both initiatives were set within the framework of celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Italy's Unification. The Italian government wanted to highlight the cultural richness of the country, and had thus organized three major exhibitions: on the history of art, on archaeology and – indeed – on folklore and culture in

the anthropological sense of the term. The ethnographic exhibition showcased materials collected by Lamberto Loria (1855-1913), an intellectual and traveller from Florence who – after extensive research in Central Asia, New Guinea, Australia and East Africa (Puccini, Dimpflmeier 2018; Dimpflmeier 2019) – had ‘discovered’ internal diversity among Italian regional cultures. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Loria had in fact gathered thousands of ethnographic artefacts. He worked with the help of physical anthropologist Aldobrandino Mochi, thanks to financial aid bestowed by Count Giovannangelo Bastogi. He also built a dense network of correspondents from various Italian regions. The artefacts were initially showcased in a museum in Florence, in 1906. They were then relocated to the aforementioned ethnographic exhibition in Rome, which, in turn, the government had assured him would become a permanent museum. This project however would not be realised until decades later, with the establishment of the National Museum of the Arts and Popular Traditions, located in the EUR district of Rome, in 1956. The First Congress of Italian Ethnography took place in conjunction with the closing of the exhibition in October 1911: an important opportunity for dozens of scholars, including eminent foreign ones, to converse and exchange ideas, and a moment of unprecedented public visibility for these disciplines (Puccini 2005; Giunta 2019).

Loria’s strong vocation as an organizer of cultural activities enabled him to gather around himself a scientific community previously dispersed and weakened by semi-amateur elements: for instance, local researchers lacking adequate methodological training, or scholars from other disciplines – such as literature and philology – who were drawn to popular traditions as a hobby rather than a professional endeavour. Before the 1911 Congress, in fact, Italian folklore studies had consisted mainly of a line of research on folk poetry and literature (songs and fairy tales, proverbs, ‘beliefs’, etc.). The philological framework adopted by this school posited a relationship between oral tradition and the history of great literature. Giuseppe Pitre had been the only important, albeit isolated, scholar who had managed to defy these conventions. In his monumental *Library of Sicilian Popular Traditions* (1871-1913) he advanced an all-round methodology for ethnographic documentation, which attended to the most diverse aspects of folk life: work and techniques, material culture, magic-religious medicine, gestures, body practices and so on. His work also kept abreast of then-current international scholarship and lines of research. Loria’s profile as a scholar was, in contrast, diametrically opposed to Pitre’s. His publications were not numerous, and he did not leave behind any comprehensive work. Nonetheless his field notes from Papua and Australia – which he never had the time or the will to organise – demonstrate methodological competence and richness of approaches comparable to those of Malinowski, who a few years later would found modern anthropology based on fieldwork in the same places (Puccini, Dimpflmeier 2018). As Francesco Baldasseroni (2013, p. 15) aptly wrote in Loria’s obituary in *Lares*, he was, rather, a ‘man of action’. Not merely because of his passion for travel and for what, at the time, were still called ‘explorations’; but for his ability to carry out scientific programmes by aggregating vast intellectual, economic and political forces as well. Moreover, while Pitre’s approach follows that of classical folklore studies in combining

a romantic idea of “the *people*” with positivistic classificatory categories, Loria is rather interested in assigning regional folklore a place within ‘ethnography’. In the broadest sense, this would include research on ‘savages’ and exotic diversity, as well as data from physical anthropology and archaeology. Loria’s major scientific contribution is described thus in another obituary by Raffaele Pettazzoni in 1913: ‘A broader concept of Italian ethnography, advanced as a correction to the narrow one of folk-lore; general ethnography [...] understood as the basis of Italian ethnography; a systematic and coordinated study of the Italian people across all Italian regions, carried out without neglecting the results of the general study of the peoples: these were the dominant ideas in the work and programme of L. Loria’ (cited in Alliegro 2018, p. 36).

It is against such backdrop of intellectual ‘action’, therefore, that in 1911 the Exhibition and the Congress took place, followed in 1912 by the foundation of the Italian Society of Ethnography (SEI) and its quarterly magazine, *Lares*. The first volume, exceptionally, was comprised of three issues (nos. 1-2-3). It opened with the reproduction of a Lar god figurine, part of the Ambrosian Library’s collection, in Milan. Stylised, this would become the magazine’s logo, accompanied by the invocative inscription ‘Enos Lares iuvate’ (Help us, you Lares!) and by Francesco Novati’s brief explication of the magazine’s name (see De Sanctis 2007). For Novati, essentially, the Lares symbolized humankind’s cultural practices:

In the simple, rough, primitive life of those men, who inhabited our mountains and valleys, the Lares were fruitful symbols of all mighty activity, represented all the conquests, all the aspirations. Wherever man was, there were they, faithful, indivisible companions, treasured supporters [...] Today’s need to recover the links in this broken chain, to recall all that has disappeared, to restore what has fallen, from the start of the long journey, lets us propitiate the genii, exquisite of youthful beauty, favourable, gay, smiling who assisted our fathers (pp. 5-6).

But the actual opening of the inaugural issue is Loria’s ‘editorial’, modestly titled ‘A few words about the programme’: a lucid synthesis of the author’s own intellectual path and main theoretical-methodological convictions, as well as that of the group gathered around the journal. These principles are well summarized by the following sentence: ‘Hence, folklorists should become ethnographers’ (Loria 1912, p. 19). For Loria, the limit of the folkloric schools is rooted in a tendency to focus almost exclusively on the oral traditions of European popular classes (songs, legends etc.), thus framing these documents into a dual isolation. On the one hand, they become disconnected from other cultures, periods or regions of the world, and deprived of comparative possibilities; any unitary notion of human culture is thus disregarded. On the other hand, the texts of the oral tradition are isolated from other aspects of social reality, particularly material culture. Yet, Loria remarks,

sometimes an artefact can tell us the history of a group’s character much better than many written pages, and it almost always carries more explicative force than other types of document: thus the amulet, more faithfully than any news, will be proof of superstition; and the crude tools of the Sardinian mountaineers, better than a long description, will give an

idea of the miserable life of these our brothers. Often, indeed, it will happen that the object cannot be replaced by any description [...] And since many objects preserve their primitive forms more tenaciously than the language and customs through long series of years [...], they can and must be considered precious documents of a distant history (Ibid.).

Loria's closest associates expressed these concepts with equal clarity. For example, Aldobrandino Mochi and Francesco Baldasseroni reiterate them in their speeches at the 1911 Congress and in their articles in the first issue of *Lares*. Their adamant methodological intimations and polemical arguments against the predominance of purely philological approaches in the folkloric tradition reflect an aspiration to make 'Italian ethnography' a modern social science, organically connected to the most advanced lines of study in Europe. The international vocation of the first issues of *Lares* offers ample evidence of this, with articles, reviews and bibliographic notes, which cover, among others, works by Andrew Lang, Arnold Van Gennep, Émile Chénon, J. Leite de Vasconcellos and the Japanese scholar Nobushige Hozumi. They included reviews of European and American journals, [2] as well as Italian journals from other disciplines, such as linguistics, sociology and geography.

Two events however reduced the enthusiasm that had followed the foundation of the journal, and the great prospects that had appeared to open. The first was the sudden demise of Lamberto Loria, found dead in his home in Rome on 4 April, 1913. He was able to see the publication of just the first issue of the journal he had founded. *Lares'* following issue hosted his obituary, penned by Francesco Baldasseroni. The group Loria had gathered around the SEI was, however, solid enough to allow the journal to move ahead, and Francesco Novati (1959-1915) was appointed the new editor. A student of Alessandro D'Ancona, he was a philologist, a man of letters and a leading exponent of the 'historical school', and had been very close to Loria during the creation of the journal. The second event to greatly hinder the *Lares* project was, of course, the outbreak of the Great War. Four issues would be published: a single and a double in 1913, a triple in 1914, and a first issue only in 1915. After that, publications ceased. At the end of the war, the conditions for resuming the SEI's activity were absent. Loria's grand project, that is the transformation of the ethnographic exhibition into a permanent national museum, was completely ignored by politicians. The invocation Baldasseroni had pronounced in his obituary of Loria, 'We trust in the judgement of our rulers' (Ibid., p. 14), thus took on a bitterly ironic meaning.

How should these first five issues be assessed? I already pointed out their international ambition, and aspiration to represent a new, more modern understanding of ethnography, in comparison to folklore. Surely, the majority of the essays still remained within the field of Italian regional folklore. However, the range of themes was significantly wider: it included customary ones such as poetry, fairy tales and folk legends, but also issues related to legal anthropology, the study of techniques and material culture, beliefs and superstitions, as well as methodological works and discussions on museum arrangement of artefacts. The most original and fascinating essay is perhaps the autobiography of the Campanian brigand Michele Di Gè, published, annotated and commented on by Gaetano Salvemini (a socialist

politician and historian who would play a great role in Italian culture), who stresses its importance for demopsychology:

This is the writing of a completely uncultivated primitive, who strongly feels what he says, and not having any literary preoccupation, lacking any formal education, often expresses himself so clearly and vigorously, despite the extreme simplicity of his means, that he could be envied by many professional writers. And we are confronted by the typical representative of southern fixed-term labourers: a shadowy and perplexing crowd of vigorous fatalists, who fifty years ago turned to the adventures of banditry due to their reluctance of being conscripted or for want of looting, and today indulge in the adventures of transoceanic emigration to escape hunger or just to improve their lot in life, running then as today towards the unknown with the feeling of unconditional obedience to an external superhuman fatality that leads them ...  
(Salvemini 2014, p. 67)

It should be noted that Salvemini borrowed the expression 'demopsychology' from Pitrè, who had thus designated his first course of popular traditions at the University of Palermo in 1910. His approach however differs greatly from the positivist folklore recalled by Pitrè's name. In the biography of brigand Michele Di Gè, Salvemini finds inspiration for drawing the historical-sociological framework of the class of Southern daily labourers, whose cultural choices he interprets as answers to specific structural realities (such as economic change, their relationship with the Italian state and with military conscription, and prospects of emigration to America). Participation in banditry is also explained within this broader context, without excusing it. Unfortunately such wide-ranging analysis was, at the time, rather uncommon in the landscape of Italian ethnography and folklore, as their methodologies of data collection and classification were not reliant on robust historical-social theory.

## 2. The Fascist Period

One might wonder why that enthusiasm, that had led to the foundation of SEI and *Lares*, collapsed at the end of the Great War? What caused the journal to fail to resume publication? And why did the entire movement, which had aimed at establishing an "Italian ethnography" as modern social science, fail to rebuild itself? One reason, as we have seen, was the demise of its founding figures. Loria died in 1913, Novati in 1915, and Pitrè, who was after all nearly one generation older than the others, in 1916. The group that had formed around *Lares* and the SEI dispersed into different scientific and intellectual enterprises (Mochi dedicated himself entirely to paleoethnology, while Baldasseroni died at the age of 45, in 1923). Another reason can be identified at the level of an overall transformation of the Italian intellectual environment: with the fading away of the positivistic ardour for the human sciences, Benedetto Croce's historicist idealism prevailed. This deemed ethnography to be, at most, a technique of data collection ancillary to historical knowledge. Although Croce himself cultivated an interest in 'folk poetry', he certainly did not encourage the constitution of an autonomous field of study that had "the people" or "the primitive" as its object. To him, these

represented the negative or the residue of history, which in turn was substantially the product of the dominant classes. The rise of fascism in the 1920s was a further reason for the failure of Loria's project, on at least two grounds. On the one hand, it led to international isolation and a consequent weakening of relations with coeval lines of ethnological and anthropological research, which had offered models and important intellectual nourishment to the group around *Lares*. On the other hand, Italian fascism sought to utilise folklore for communicating with the masses, thus turning it into an instrument of political and ideological consensus. The regime promoted, and sometimes fabricated from scratch, numerous folk festivals and historical re-enactments, but also seized cultural institutions and folklore research organisations.

In other respects, however, such an emphasis on folklore resulted in a new beginning for *Lares* – although on an entirely different basis to that originally set by Loria. The journal, in fact, resumed its publications in 1930 as an organ of the *Comitato Nazionale per le Tradizioni Popolari*, *CNTP* (National Committee for Popular Traditions), founded two years earlier within the *Centro di Alti Studi dell'Istituto Fascista di Cultura* (Centre for Advanced Studies of the Fascist Cultural Institute). Its main promoter, Paolo Toschi, would be a key figure in the history of *Lares* for over forty years until his death in 1973. Born in 1883 in Lugo di Romagna, Toschi had a philological and literary background. He was interested in folk poetry and peasant folklore, where he looked for traces of the great literary tradition. His first work (Toschi 1935) tried to identify the main styles and centres of diffusion of Italian religious poetry, by means of comparing written documents and oral sources. The latter were classified and analysed on the basis of metrics and style, in order to date their origin and trace their history in terms of circulation and variation. Toschi, not unlike other exponents of the 'historical school' in which he was trained, radically rejected the romantic theory that posited as collective and spontaneous the origin of 'popular poetry'. Rather, he sought to trace it back with a focus on authorship, stressing its constant interaction and mutual exchange with 'high' and written traditions. His entire career was dedicated to this subject, and this set him apart from Loria and the 'ethnographic school'. In this frame, folklore was characterised as a repertoire of forms within folk aesthetics, rather than as culture in the anthropological meaning: living documents, 'relics', from bygone eras of literature and art, to be incorporated into the history of the 'major' disciplines.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, Toschi taught in secondary school, obtained the "Libera docenza" (a kind of lecturer's qualification) and built a network of relationships with numerous historical-religious and folklore scholars, including Michele Barbi, Raffaele Pettazzoni and Giuseppe Cocchiara. This network was behind the idea of the *CNTP* and the first National Congress of Popular Traditions, which took place in Florence in 1929. A special occasion on scientific as well as political grounds, the Congress brought together the major Italian experts and confirmed fascism's strong ideological interference in the field. As already mentioned, the regime considered folklore crucial for building consensus, and endeavoured to orient it towards a nationalist exaltation of Italianness and the conservative values of the peasant world. The idea of starting a journal and linking it to *Lares*' earlier



incarnation was born from the success of the 1929 Congress, which had been sanctioned by the presence of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy. The first issue of the new series came out in June 1930 (year VIII of the fascist calendar) under the direction of Toschi. The subtitle read 'Organ of the National Committee for Popular Traditions – Florence'. A clear sense of continuity was suggested by the use of the title and title page of the earlier series. However it was continuity with Novati, rather than Loria (or Mochi and Baldasseroni). Indeed Toschi had been trained in the 'historical school' of philology and literature, of which Novati was a renowned representative: the first article of the issue was a tribute to Novati by Pio Rajna, teacher of Toschi and exponent of that same school of thought. The article opens by explaining why the title of the journal had been reclaimed:

The title of the Bulletin – which unfortunately lasted little more than a three-year period – of the Italian Society of Ethnography, reappears after fifteen years on the title page of the journal of the recently established "National Committee" for Popular Traditions. That is to say "Folklore", an exotic term but so widespread that we accept it with good grace. Let us not be dazed by this loanword. As conceived today, Folklore and Ethnography are very similar and differ only by virtue of their scope [... Therefore] the name *Lares* is, better yet, aptly utilised as symbol of domestic and rural life, customs and popular beliefs, in each of their manifestations. Further, it lends brevity and precision: qualities always desirable in a title (Rajna 1930, p. 5).

With hindsight, Rajna's warning conveys the opposite meaning of what it had intended: that is, the great distance separating Loria's 'ethnography' from the concept of 'folklore' that the journal's re-founders had adopted (bizarrely apologising for the use of an 'exotic' word, seemingly as tribute to fascist linguistic autarchy). '[D]omestic and rural life, customs and popular beliefs': a description of ethnography's object notably removed from that which was emerging in Loria's broader understanding of culture. This was meant to bring cultures high and low, geographically near and remote, domestic and exotic onto the same level of analysis. Whereas folklore – as Toschi and Rajna seemed to understand it – concerns "a people" irreparably detached from the upper classes, confined within the boundaries of its own archaism, naivety and obliviousness. In those same years Antonio Gramsci – despite his imprisonment by the fascist regime – was formulating ideas on the extent to which Italian intellectuals (writers, for example) had been aloof from "the people" (i.e. from the lower classes), thus hindering the realisation of national unification on the cultural level. The folklorists of the 1920s and 1930s illustrate just this: how an intellectual class can look down on the people from the heights of a historically situated sense of compassion and, simultaneously, keep them at a distance in moral terms. The lower classes were thus appealing only insofar as they were involuntary custodians of cultural treasures, such as metric systems, narrative themes and other kinds of oral lore, to which they were ultimately oblivious. In addition to all this, fascism brought about the exaltation of values allegedly associated with "rural life" – that is, the traditional peasant world – such as simplicity, frugality, obedience to authority, women's subordinate role and an ingenuous and fatalistic faith.

*Lares's* second series (from 1930 to 1943) was thus shaped by this ideological disposition and by constant tensions between a “scientific” posture, typical of the neutral collection of data and documents of popular life, and adherence to fascism’s ideological programme. Toschi’s intellectual biography, in particular, is fraught with this tension. It manifests itself already in 1930 in a brief editorial piece, entitled “To the reader-friend”, that opens the journal’s first issue. The focus is on two main concepts, the first being Toschi’s vision of a ‘science’ of popular traditions. Since the local realities that constitute its subject are scattered throughout national territory, this science requires a network of observers and data collectors, directed by a central body that supervises their methodology. ‘Research carried out by local collectors and scholars can be encouraged, directed, assisted by experts and specialists: these in turn find valuable collaborators in the regional folklorists, who provide information and data that can be drawn on for comparative works and far-reaching studies [...] Our journal therefore aims at creating and facilitating multiple relationships, ensuring that they take place in an atmosphere of rigorous study and friendly collaboration’ (Toschi 1930, p. 3). The reference here is to setting up a scientific community and organising knowledge that, until then, had seemed to originate from distinct, fragmented initiatives. Further, we find hints at the nineteenth-century notion of a hierarchical organization of knowledge. Hereby, research at the local level is conducted by amateur enthusiasts who supply “information” or “data” to more knowledgeable comparative scholars, who place themselves in a geographic and epistemic ‘centre’. Toschi’s other argument concerns what, in his view, was a propitious moment for the revival of folkloric studies, marked by fascism and its advancement of new national pride. “In recent years, a new period has begun in Italy for the study of Popular Traditions, [whose investigative work] is enabled and nourished by the lively reawakening of national sentiment stemming from Fascism [...]. Our journal, which was born at the service of these ideas, appeals to the unity of all scholars and sends its fraternal greetings to associations, journals and individual enthusiasts of Popular Traditions’ (ibid., p. 4).

In the post-World War II period, the adhesion of Toschi and his collaborators to fascism was interpreted as merely instrumental, an attempt to exploit the spaces that were opened up for neutral scientific development, without undue ideological compromises. Nonetheless, such interpretation does not stand up to facts. The fascistisation of folklore studies became increasingly clear during the 1930s. A crucial moment in this tendency was the 1932 integration of the CNTP into the new National Committee for Popular Arts (CNAP). The latter was directly controlled by the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, or OND (National Recreational Club), the great Italian fascist leisure and recreational organization. CNAP was chaired by historian of philosophy Emilio Bodrero, a leading exponent of fascist politics. Thus, from 1933, *Lares* too underwent a transformation: the title page listed Bodrero as editor and Paolo Toschi as deputy editor, while the headquarters were relocated from Florence to Rome (at the Ministry of Justice, which housed the CNAP). The journal maintained its former editorial line, including the sections wanted by Toschi, such as the one entitled *A veglia* [3] that provided bibliographic reports and news on events pertinent to the study of folklore. The



issues that came out in the 1930s were quarterly (although occasionally published as doubles). The contributions dealt primarily with regional folklore and Italian oral traditions, but other European realities were featured systematically. Articles, reviews and bibliographic reports showed consistent interest in folklore studies originating from England, France, Greece, Finland, Austria, Malta and other European countries, as well as making occasional forays into extra-European folklore, such as from Cuba and Canada. Recurring among its contributors were prominent figures who would play a central role in the field of post-war demology: Giuseppe Vidossi (among other things, editor of an issue on popular medicine, in 1935); Giuseppe Cocchiara and Carmelina Naselli (who will be later, with Toschi, recipients of the first professorship in Literature of Popular Traditions, in 1949; Alliegro 2011, p. 364 ff.); important personalities from other disciplines, such as Indologist Paolo Emilio Pavolini (his son, Alessandro, was Minister of Popular Culture, later secretary of the Republican Fascist Party, and one of the closest collaborators of Mussolini); philologist Giovanni Crocioni. Other systematic contributors were Amy Bernardy, Emma Bona, Ester Fano, Francesco Balilla Pratella, Saverio La Sorsa, Cesare Caravaglios, authors whose work was consistent with the cultural policies of fascism.

The intrusiveness of Fascism's ideological apparatus grew further over the decade. It reflected itself in a widespread jargon, which mandated – among other things – replacing the term 'folklore' with the autarchic 'popolaresca'; most importantly, it imbued editorials and position essays, often penned by Bodrero. One of his recurring themes, used against political regionalism, was that of the purported national unity of Italian popular traditions; another was the use of tradition as rationale and glue for the regime's expansionist policies.

On the first theme, he wrote:

For some time the fascist regime suppressed the word 'region' in all its actions, in all its expressions or manifestations; and with the word, almost every related institution [...] Regional particularism has caused immense misfortune in our history, therefore it was appropriate to erase all traces of this very sad relic of the past and make us feel, through the abolition of all that was regional, that the Italian people had finally achieved unity. Except that, however, regions have reappeared in the actions of the Fascist regime, due to the inevitability of history, and in many manifestations, which should however be understood correctly, that is, not as institutions but as spiritual entities (Bodrero 1936, p. 5).

The editor is here trying to justify *Lares'* vigorous regionalism in the face of the fascist regime's harsh attitude towards any form of regional autonomy. His solution was founded upon an idea of 'region' as 'spiritual' entity, rather than political, and the claim that beneath the diversity of customs and traditions lay substantial national unity. Both research and revitalized folkloristic events were to highlight such unity, which could be achieved only through strict centralisation. This argument led Bodrero to reconsider Loria's project of a Roman Museum of Ethnography (now 'Popular Arts'). His proposed set-up was inspired by Scandinavian open air museums:

But the national museum of popular arts should not be a mere collection of items showcased in displays, each with their explanatory tags, but rather something much more alive, which truly illustrates the direct connection of people with earth, so that the visitors themselves could easily grasp it. An open-air museum should therefore be created. [...] There was an attempt with the 1911 exhibition, remembered by everyone as very singular and brilliant; but it was a temporary exhibition, which was dissolved once the circumstances that had given rise to it changed. Now I think we should replicate that exhibition, but in a permanent form. I even fantasize, as if in a dream, that we could find a beautiful park in Rome (for example that one in Parioli) to build a number of houses, each representing the customary dwelling of an Italian region (Sicilian, Piedmontese, Tuscan, Venetian, etc.), and that in each you could observe the typical furnishings and customs of the region; but no parade of rigid mannequins: customs should be alive... (Ibid., p. 11)

After all, if traditions foster national unity, they can also function as ideological defence of the expansionist idea of a “Greater Italy”. “In our own ethnographic museum one could see incontrovertible evidence of the Italian character of Nice, Malta, Corsica, Dalmatia, that is, the unredeemed boundaries of the Italian nation’ (Ibid., p. 7). Indeed research on these areas was promoted and featured widely in *Lares*, as were the traditions of Italy’s colonies in Africa, such as Abyssinia. At the end of the 1930s the idea of tradition as symbol of national identity started to be expressed through the idiom of race. In 1938 Toschi himself, commenting enthusiastically on Minister Bottai’s decision to include ‘Literature of Popular Traditions’ into the university curriculum, stated: ‘the unmistakable genuine features of the Italian race express themselves in the millennial history of our people. The study of popular traditions therefore improves thanks to renewed interest and shows, above all, its true worth as political and social reality’ (Toschi 1938, p. 476). The following year, within a twinning project described as “gesture of cultural camaraderie”, the *German Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* and *Lares* (n. 4-5-6 of 1939) dedicated special issues to Italian and German studies of folklore respectively. The purpose was illuminating ‘the most interesting aspects and questions of a discipline that – endeavouring to discover in traditional life the indelible signs of bloodlines - occupies a prominent place in the Third Reich’s enthusiasm for research’ (*Lares* 1939, pp. 175-6).

### 3. The Post-War Period

*Lares* continued its publications until mid-1943, with the war underway. Browsing through the last issues of the series, one would find no indication that something tremendous and overwhelming was happening out there. The only hints are two brilliant articles by Vidossi on ‘war demopsychology’, pertaining to manifestations of the Virgin Mary in bomb shelters, legends about the protection afforded by saints to churches and monuments during air-raids, rumours of prophecies about the end of the war, etc. (Vidossi 1943a, 1943b). In his column *A veglia*, Toschi – writing about a similar piece by Gaetano Perusini, from a local Friulian magazine – states: ‘War, this grandiose phenomenon that affects and permeates all manifestations of social life and the human soul, produces in the field of demopsychology a

flourishing of reminiscences, beliefs, practices and expressions typical of the popular mindset that should be thoroughly studied by scholars' (Toschi 1943, pp. 172-3). We may be sympathetic towards these intellectuals, caught up in the vortex of the most dramatic events of the twentieth century but still able to cast a neutral gaze on minor everyday occurrences in the life of the lower classes, as observers or rather collectors. This is perhaps unsurprising, since the idea of philological 'collection' is crucial in the work of Toschi and his collaborators. Otherwise, we could be outraged by their obliviousness to the subversion of the very possibility of a detached, positivistic posture. Pain and violence compel us to see war as neither a 'grandiose phenomenon' nor a cultural laboratory for neutral observation, but rather as a permanent rupture in the relationship between one's cognitive self and the object of study, in this case "the people" (De Simonis-Dei 2010).

In the same years, an anthropological approach was taking shape in Italy that would prove radically alternative to that of the *Lares* group. At its core was a different relationship with war (and with fascism and the Resistance). I am referring, in particular, to Ernesto De Martino's work and to his argument concerning a "crisis of presence" and its mythico-ritual redemption. Ceremonial magic and, more generally, 'traditional' cultures would be founded upon these principles. He addressed these themes in his 1948 masterpiece, *Il mondo magico* ('The World of Magic'), written during the tough years of the war and the Italian Resistance. In it de Martino doesn't mention explicitly rites and symbols of war, or the existential condition of soldiers and civilian victims. Nevertheless one can't escape the impression that the book's focus on a 'drama' of lost and regained presence has to do with concomitant circumstances that produced the disintegration and rebirth of the Western subject (Charuty 2010, Ciavolella 2018). As argued by Cesare Cases, de Martino's notions of crisis of presence and cultural redemption were a way of talking about the historical crisis of his time: "What happens is a sort of transference: an unexpressed emotional charge is projected onto the object, emotional instability and insecurity experienced in the present become permanent elements of the world of magic [...] Because of this transference *The World of Magic* is, somehow, the Western world's 'redemption of presence'" (Cases 1973, p. xxv). We are a long way from the idea of war as laboratory that dominated positivist thought. In a laboratory the distinction between subject and object is essential and categorical. The folklorists' reasoning is grounded on similar distinctions: on the one hand are the intellectuals, who are part of the ruling classes and guided by reason and progress; on the other hand is 'the people', guided by archaic and irrational cultural logic. The former think, the latter live – or die, when their country demands their sacrifice. For de Martino, if anything, war annihilates every conceivable anthropological laboratory, and the trust in the type of reason and progress it would require. The very knowing self will never be the same in a world that has come apart.

The publication of Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* is another important factor in the shift which the concept of "popular culture" underwent in the post-war period. Writing during his imprisonment, Gramsci proposed to understand folklore as the culture of subordinate classes. Its study, therefore, should have emancipated itself from a quest for the 'picturesque' as well as from mere philological documentation, and rather address the core of social

dynamics, relationships between classes and 'hegemonic' processes through which the ruling classes generate the cultural setting for their power (Gramsci 1975 [1949]). This represented a clean break with the uniform conception of 'the people' postulated by positivistic approaches: a premodern entity, unknowing custodian of archaic cultural 'relics'. De Martino himself would develop this concept, drawing on his 'ethnographic expeditions' in Lucania and Apulia and breaking away from the 'naturalistic' approach of folkloric tradition. His position was clearly formulated in a piece from the 1950s, in the context of a controversy with Toschi; the target of his criticism was Giuseppe Pitrè but it extended to the entire folkloric approach:

For Pitrè it is still a matter of isolating features of popular and peasant ideology, which can be archaic to varying degrees, of describing them accurately, and of establishing the resulting links in a chain of customs, practices and beliefs. But, obviously, this succession – even if ascertained – is not history. And it will never be, because by isolating those features we ourselves have torn them forever from history, driven back and lost them to the great night of 'prehistory' (De Martino 1954, 221-2).

Toschi, for his part, read Gramsci and debated with de Martino – on the pages of the journal *La Lapa* – about the founding fathers of Italian ethnology. De Martino identified them, following a historicist persuasion, as De Sanctis, Croce and Gramsci. Comparetti, D'Ancona, Novati, Barbi and Pitrè were instead the names referred to by Toschi, consistent with his philological-folkloric formation (Toschi, De Martino 1953; cf. Alliegro 2011, pp. 377 ff.). It was however a debate of the deaf. Toschi did not feel involved in the post-war cultural climate – neither in what he called "theoretical ruminations" (Ibid., p. 339), nor in the ethical-political passions that so deeply animated the Gramscian camp. In 1949, as already mentioned, Toschi obtained (with Cocchiara and Naselli) the first professorship in Literature of popular traditions in Italy (for further details see Alliegro 2011, p. 364 ff.). The teaching post that he already held in Rome as adjunct professor thus became a stable tenure and, by his choice, took the name of History [not Literature] of popular traditions. In the same year he promoted a resumption of publications for *Lares*, this time in the guise of the bulletin of the Italian Society of Ethnography, which also was resurrected in 1944. The magazine was published by Leo S. Olschki Editore, of Florence. Publisher Aldo Olschki had known Toschi in the army during World War I, and the two had since remained friends. The Italian Society of Ethnography counted as members the major folklorists of the time, as well as scholars from related disciplines. [4] It is also interesting to read today how the Society's scientific programme is distributed among 'Commissions', as outlined in the Statute:

1) Bibliography; 2) Methodology – Comparative research – Relations with other disciplines; 3) Primitive survivals; 4) Survivals of the ancient and medieval world; 5) Popular literature and dialectology; 6) Music, dance and popular theatre; 7) Popular arts and clothing; 8) Rural architecture and planning; 9) Popular religiousness; 10) Customs and beliefs; 11) Legal traditions; 12) Folklore of Work; 13) Folklore of War; 14) Popular medicine and folklore of nature (*Lares* 1949).

Disciplinary composition and thematic partition of the scientific programme reflect the delay accumulated by ethno-anthropological disciplines in Italy compared to English and French-speaking countries. No reference is found to lines of research that we recognise as the most influential of the first half of the twentieth century: the French school of sociology, Boasian anthropology, the Culture and personality movement in the United States, British social anthropology, Russian formalism and the Prague linguistic circle, as well as sociology and psychoanalysis. This was due to twenty years of cultural isolation during fascism, but also to resistance offered to human and social sciences by dominant idealist and historicist approaches. Italian readers were exposed to new trends through sources such as the series of books on religion, ethnology and psychology, known as the 'Purple Series', by publisher Einaudi, directed by De Martino and novelist Cesare Pavese. The *Lares* group kept aloof, despite Toschi publishing the History of Italian Theatre [Toschi 1955] – one of his most important works – in the Purple Series. Each issue of the journal, needless to say, offered plenty of reviews and bibliographic reports, with an eye on the international panorama of studies. [5] The range of selection, however, focused exclusively on folklore in the strictest sense. The great theoretical debates that were taking place in the human sciences were entirely neglected. There was no trace of structuralism, for example, but neither was there any echo of the all-Italian 'debate on folklore' that had taken off from Gramsci's considerations, and seen De Martino opposed to both Crocian and Marxist intellectuals; the matter of dispute was the role of destitute southern peasants' popular culture within Italy's democratic reconstruction, and the gradual emancipation of subordinate classes (Dei 2018, ch. 4; Clemente, Meoni, Squillacciotti 1975; Pasquinelli 1976). Toschi was well aware of this debate, and had engaged – as mentioned before – in a discussion with De Martino about the Italian 'founding fathers'. Even so, Toschi did not think it appropriate to give it space on his journal, perhaps because the matter was strictly theoretical and overly politicized. On *Lares*, Gramsci was mentioned in a brief note, penned by Toschi, reporting about a presentation of the book *Literature and National Life*, which he had taken part in (Toschi 1949); and in a 1957 article by Sebastiano Lo Nigro, dedicated to Gramscian analyses of popular literature. Lo Nigro's article, moreover, totally missed the mark when it came to analysing the *Prison Notebooks*' methodology: whereas Gramsci correlated artistic and literary creation with concrete historical processes of hegemony and analysed reading practices, Lo Nigro accused him of sociological reductionism. The following would have ensued: a) the autonomy of art would be denied, since its purpose would be mere political propaganda; and b) high and low literature could not be distinguished. For example, writing of Gramsci's criticism of Giovanni Verga's realism (in Italian, "verismo"), Lo Nigro maintained that the former blamed the latter for lacking direct political commitment and failing to convey a condemnation of the conditions of the subordinate classes through his novels. 'Once again, art as free representation of all reality, in its multiple values and contradictions, was confused with the thesis-novel, which instead aims at describing a particular aspect of it, by typifying characters and situations and deforming life's variety and intertwining web' (Lo Nigro 1957, p. 9). That is to say, the first time *Lares* dealt with Gramsci, the latter was associated with precisely those Orthodox Marxist positions he had endeavoured to

overcome. As for De Martino, in 1953 Toschi – drawing upon a report published on the journal *Società* – gave a brief account of his ethnological expeditions in Lucania; the name of the author was however misrepresented as 'Enrico De Martino' (Toschi 1953, p. 95). In 1963, *Lares* carried a brief note by De Martino, about a conference on Sardinian magic-religious ritual of "argism" (De Martino 1963). The same year Toschi, in the section *A veglia*, indulged in malicious irony with a 'four-word review of De Martino's essay collection *Furore simbolo valore* (*Fury Symbol Value*), which read 'Much fury, little value' (Toschi 1963). Malicious, and very careless indeed, since the book's theoretical impetus has stood the test of time, something that certainly cannot be said of most of the reviewer's. De Martino would not be mentioned again in the journal, except for a short obituary in 1966 by Mario Gandini (Gandini 1966). Similarly, *Lares* never made any reference to the works of Rocco Scotellaro, Gianni Bosio and his folk music project *Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano*, Diego Carpitella, Alan Lomax, Nuto Revelli, Danilo Montaldi and other intellectuals whose approach to popular culture was based on social enquiry from a militant perspective; no reference was made either to the debates on neorealism and Italy's 'southern question', at the centre of which already lay the relationship between high and low culture.

It is by now evident that Toschi's view of folklore, reflected in his editorial policy at *Lares*, was firmly rooted in the framework of the nineteenth-century historico-philological school. This kept Italian folklore consciously segregated and thus protected from international anthropological debates and the specific strand of social studies that developed in post-war Italy. The latter was centred on a class-based understanding of the people, on methodologies (albeit different) of fieldwork and on forms of ethico-political engagement. Reconciliation between the two components would later be attempted by Giovanni Battista Bronzini, who was Toschi's disciple and succeeded him in the direction of *Lares* after his death in 1974. Before turning to the analysis of this conjuncture, I would like to further emphasize some characteristics of the journal during Toschi's lengthy post-war direction. Firstly, the very structure of the issues reflects Toschi's conception of folkloric research: a centralized direction, guarding over standards of scientific-methodological rigour, and a network of regional collaborators-correspondents, tasked with 'collecting' local data that grows, cumulatively, into a documentary encyclopaedia. Hence the fragmentariness of the issues, whose layout – consisting of short essays, information sections, reviews, bibliographic surveys, very brief news pieces on cultural events, obituaries, proceedings of the meetings of the Society of Ethnography, anecdotes and gleanings – was meant to convey the appearance of a 'bulletin'. See, for example, the section 'Popular traditions in everyday news', which presented newspaper articles on folkloric 'survivals' – in most cases, instances of superstition and magic, sometimes related to acts of violence; facts that were fascinating in their own right, but were left at the discretion of newspapers and tabloids as trivia. Hence the picturesque and shameful backwardness of folklore were exacerbated – precisely what, in principle, *Lares* intended – and was expected – to prevent. Very indicative of Toschi's epistemology was also a note he wrote in 1972 to communicate the anastatic reprint of the first series of *Lares* (1912-15) by publisher Leo S. Olschki. Toschi's note read:



Upon reading the issues of the journal from that time, one is immediately led to observe the great gap with today's ethnographic studies, concerning the field of Italian popular traditions as well, which as we can see has disappeared. Nor have studies in democratic sectors, in recent years, put the *demos* at their heart in its typical and traditional manifestations. Regions have been created, but their history – expressed in their most typical customs – does not seem to attract much attention. As if one wanted to reconstruct a family, without considering which branch it comes from. A family tree is necessary as well. The reconstruction of the regions would provide, for the first time, an exact and specific overview of Italian folklore. If Italy were able to make use of research as France does – with Arnold Van Gennep's work – it could boast its people's noble titles. The ten-volume *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* has remained unfinished, but it is sufficient to certify the civilization and culture of the French people. In Italy, only Sicily can boast Pitre's twenty and more volumes, and it was Gentile who urged its reprint. But one can already see that something is changing in our favour. RAI [Italian broadcasting company, TN] have become aware of the great treasure possessed by the Italian regions and have begun to put it to good use. Let's hurry up, then! Let each region have a centre for the study of folklore so that we can reach our goal: a complete representation of Italian traditional popular life (Toschi 1972, p. 84).

The Italian ordinary-status Regions were established in 1970 as local administrative bodies not directly subject to the central government. With the implementation of “decentralisation” measures in the mid-1990s, regional powers on culture came to include the creation of local libraries, programmes of ‘lifelong education’ and valorisation of local, ‘bottom-up’ aspects of history and cultural heritage. Some regions would also engage in activities related to demological and ‘traditional’ heritage. Toschi, however, did not grasp the novel potentials of the moment, as attested by his proposing Pitre as a model and insisting upon the concepts of ‘typicality’ of ‘customs’. Moreover, his notion of ‘a centre in each region’ seems to pervert the model of decentralization and to allude, rather, to a ‘prefectural’, or ‘Napoleonic’ structure, whereby peripheries depend on a centre.

Furthermore, as regards this phase in the history of *Lares*: Italy was experiencing violent and profound changes in its economic, social and cultural structures. The relation between high and low culture was undergoing a process of radical transformation, caused by industrialization and urbanization, desertion of rural areas, higher levels of education, the diffusion of television and mass culture. Traditional folklore, inextricably linked to the peasant world and a certain degree of isolation, had lost its social foundations within a generation. What was left? Ever more isolated survivals? Or did folklore endure as revivals within commercial and mass culture? Or rather, did it take on alternative forms in the context of the popular and lower classes' new living conditions? These were questions that, since the early 1960s, had begun to be widely asked among Italian intellectuals (especially in relation to the phenomenon of folk music revival; see Plastino 2016) but which *Lares* never addressed. Of course, one could not expect of Toschi, trained in a tradition that saw folklore studies as search for ‘living relics’, to situate his thinking within such frames. Rather, it

would appear that he intended the journal as bulwark of resistance and isolation from the transformations of his time; or, perhaps, as space immersed in the perpetual present of an immutable 'people' that holds onto secret treasures only intellectuals can see and appreciate. This series of *Lares* offers only one bizarre and notable exception. A 1969 article, by Toschi himself, entitled 'Structuralism and folklore', in which he dealt with a trend then fashionable, as well as with the culture climate of the 1968 movement. The article is inspired by the Italian publication of *Usi e significati del termine struttura nelle scienze umane e sociali*, an interdisciplinary collection of essays edited by Roger Bastide (Bastide 1965, ed. orig. 1959). Toschi used the volume to point out the wide range of usages of the concept of structuralism, a cultural fad that potentially applies to everything and nothing. He also stressed that the concept appeared to be already superseded by a revival of Sartrian existentialism and by versions of neo-humanism that reject the death of man and the subject. To prove it, he quoted none other than theorists associated with the May 1968 movement in France. He did so in his particular way, by collating journalistic interviews without (apparently) revealing his position. It is surprising to read Toschi writing on Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Foucault, and commenting sarcastically on Greimas' terminology and his uses of morpheme, seed, actant and arch-actant. However he quickly recollected himself, and went back to serious matters: "as far as folklore is concerned, structuralism has so far been applied in two fields: popular novellas and poetry. We will consider the most relevant studies in both fields. And we will start from the most recent, devoted precisely to popular poetry' (Toschi 1969, p. 12). To this end he cited the work of his pupil Alberto M. Cirese on strambotto verse. Curiously, he found nothing better to do than quote his own review of Cirese's work, previously published in another journal; in it, historico-philological analysis prevails (of the origin, or precedence, of certain poetic forms), and only a few generic observations are dedicated to structural analysis. He concluded the article with a 'to be continued', and the announcement of a discussion of Propp's work on fairy tales. Yet, there was to be no continuation, save for structural analyses of fairy tales and legends (such as those of Elisabetta Gulli (1972) and Anna Merendino (1973)).

#### 4. The demological phase

The following editorial premise inaugurated the 1970s for *Lares*:

This issue marks our journal's affiliation with the Italian Federation of Popular Arts and Traditions, within the framework of the activities of E.N.A.L.[a workmen's national body active from 1945 to 1978, NT]. We'd like to emphasize the importance and meaning of this event. The importance, because our readership will widen, as well as the number of those who take part in the typical incarnations and expressions of folklore; the meaning, because there is a closer alliance of science and life, between the study of popular traditions and the traditions themselves, as are preserved in today's life. *Lares* was founded in Florence in 1912 and, having been suspended in 1915, resumed its publications in 1930. Save for a discontinuation caused by the Second World War, it has continued to carry on its business since 1949, thus becoming the only Italian journal on Italian folklore, which stands out for its value in the national and

international sphere. This new step forward certainly bodes well for the future (*Lares* 1970, p. 4).

In 1945 ENAL (which can be translated literally as National Body for Workers' Assistance) had replaced the fascist National Recreational Club – OND in Italian. Among its activities was supporting folklore groups dedicated to the staging of regional music, dances and dresses. In 1970, these groups set up a federation (which after the dissolution of ENAL in 1978 would continue to exist as Italian Federation of Popular Traditions – FITP). Its aim was to combine performance initiatives with study and research. Already at the constitutive assembly Toschi, one of the protagonists since the early days of the Federation, put forward a partnership with *Lares*, modelled on the one with the OND. The journal would host a supplement on the activities of the Federation, in return for financial support (quantified in the purchase of 100 yearly subscriptions, for a total of 350,000 Italian Lira (roughly € 3200 today). The contribution was necessary also in light of the publisher Olschki's financial difficulties, caused by the 1966 Florence flood. As a consequence of this, Giuseppe Profeta, a student of Toschi and professor of History of popular traditions at the University of L'Aquila, would play a central role as scientific consultant and then President of the Federation in the 1970s.

In 1971 another follower of Toschi's, Giovanni Battista Bronzini, became the deputy editor of *Lares*. His position as chair of History of popular traditions at the University of Bari provided the journal with further institutional affiliation, as well as its editorial headquarters. After Toschi's death, on 11 August 1974, Bronzini became the journal's editor (officially from issue n. 2-4, year XL, April-December 1974): he would fill the role for nearly thirty years until his death in 2002, a crucial period in the history of Italian demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines. Born in Matera in 1925, Bronzini belonged to the post-war generation of scholars formed in a cultural climate which was receptive to human and social sciences. The separation between folklore, approached from a philological-literary perspective, and anthropology (or ethnology) oriented towards field research and social theory was no longer clear-cut. It was the generation of the founders of demology. This term was used occasionally already in the fascist period to indicate studies of popular traditions (as substitute for the English 'folklore' and the preposterous and autarchic 'popolaresca'). Starting in the late 1960s, 'demology' became the designation of choice for those scholars of popular culture who followed the new guidelines influenced by Gramsci and De Martino, as well as current international anthropological debates. Unlike De Martino himself however, they intended to re-engage these approaches with a specifically Italian tradition of folklore. The staunchest supporter of this line was perhaps Alberto M. Cirese. A student of Toschi's too, slightly older than Bronzini (b. 1921), he was trained in the study of popular poetry (his father Eugene was an intellectual and dialect poet from Molise). In the 1950s Cirese had approached De Martino's themes of research, as well as political engagement, structuralism and contemporary anthropology (he was the translator of Lévi-Strauss' *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, and introduced authors such as Evans-Pritchard and Leroi-Gourhan in Italy). After De Martino's death, however, he did not follow the latter's stance towards folklore studies. On the contrary, his goal was to reform them on the basis of a Gramscian

definition of “the people”. So he assigned great importance to the concepts of hegemony and subordination, keywords of his famous textbook *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne* – on which generations of anthropology students would be trained (Cirese 1973). These concepts allowed him – in a wide and sophisticated theoretical framework – to recover the scientific approach of romantic and positivist data collection, oriented towards a cumulative science that he chose to call demology (Dei 2018; Dei-Fanelli 2015). His action also proved successful at an institutional level: a large part of the scientific community of the time converged upon his programme, which articulates the academic field into three large areas (anthropology, ethnology, demology – reflected in what today is the ministerial denomination of DEA – demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines). Bronzini followed a path similar to Cirese’s, although diametrically opposed. He had started from positions that were more ‘faithful’ to Toschi’s, but later opened up widely to Gramsci’s thought, to structuralism and anthropological theory, as well as to ethnographic methodologies, thus transcending purely philological-documentary ones. He maintained popular poetry and the relationship between high and folk literature (for example, he wrote about Carlo Levi and Rocco Scotellaro) at the centre of his work but devoted himself also to specifically anthropological fields, such as documenting peasant work, material culture and popular festivals, particularly in Lucania. To illustrate his positions, I will make use of something he published in his early years as editor of *Lares*: apparently only a minor writing, composed for the opening of the museum of Latiano, in Apulia; in actuality a manifesto for his idea of cultural traditions, understood as communicative process and cultural heritage, that distanced him greatly from Toschi. First of all, Bronzini drew attention to the importance of promoting traditions within a broader notion of cultural heritage that comes under the scope of regional competencies. I have already mentioned that Italian regions with ordinary status were established in 1970 and assigned competences in the area of local cultural heritage. This was a pivotal moment in the democratization of culture, which laid the foundation – in the remarkable cultural and political climate of those years – of a systematic valorisation of popular culture and ‘history from below’. In short, a transformation capable of attributing the same dignity and historical relevance of the dominant classes to the culture of the lower classes. This point of view was clearly expressed by Bronzini in the following excerpt (see Bronzini 1976 for the relationship between popular culture and regional policies):

For the purposes of safeguarding the inventory and evaluation of regional folklore’s heritage, a task which various regions – including Apulia – are undertaking, we must become aware of the prominent place occupied by popular traditions in current cultural affairs. This is the result of new historiographic parameters, which have led to economic and social aspects becoming at least as important as aesthetic ones, if not more so. The size of the masses thus prevails over that of the individuals, not only as passive subjects (the status they were recognized until not long ago), but also as agents of history. The latter in turn are considered no longer as a collection of notable enterprises, but as a dense mesh of intertwined threads that we all weave daily through everyday as well as exceptional behaviour (Bronzini 1975, p. 379).

The opportunity to study popular classes' work and material culture thus was raised in a context of cultural democratization and 'anthropological' perspectives on history. Bronzini places these developments in explicit contrast to Crociani and idealistic understandings of culture (and to claims of ruling classes' exclusive role in its creation):

Of this thick mesh [...] are thus constituent – alongside imposing buildings of thought, intellect and technique, and dazzling creations of art – also those beliefs, customs, legends and devices, all those things, or “little thingies” (as Croce used to call them from his Filomarino mansion, stronghold of his idealism, so fierce and consistently oblivious to the surrounding social reality). Scholars and amateur experts (they were even more responsible for the resulting abstraction) arranged or rather dropped those things into a sort of hybrid, often tasteless mixture, the so-called folklore. But those things are no longer a repertoire of curiosities, a display of extravagances, some enchanting, others monstrous, to be showcased (as was usual) as exotic items and samples (ethnocentrism was such that the native was taken for exotic, only because 'other', different from 'us'), but they are a primary source – on a cognitive level – for approaching life as it used to be, as it is and as it is going to be in the future ... (Ibid.)

Out of all this, a modern anthropological concept of culture could be formulated, one which overcame earlier aestheticising approaches to folklore founded on philology. The new concept of culture led to transcending the too neat separation of 'spiritual and material culture, two realities and activities that seemed almost antithetical, so far however studied individually and mostly with a negative bias towards the latter [...] This leap was made precisely thanks to the Marxian concept of production, or, if we want to take a less ideological perspective, through the collective aspects of Saussurian linguistics' (Ibid., p. 380). Applied to popular traditions, such a 'broad idea of culture' shed light on 'every aspect of a community's collective life: singing folk songs, telling legends and fairy tales, reciting spells, as well as making work tools, such as a plough, a cart, a fishing net, sewing costumes, making devotional objects on commission, are all part of a people's inventiveness' (Ibid.). Finally, Bronzini traces all this back to a semiotic concept of culture, that is, to culture as communication. Thus the idea of 'Folk-lore as inventory of facts and things' can truly be overcome, emphasising instead

that community drive which supports the creation and re-creation of folkloric behaviours and objects and purposefully generates that social capacity which is intense in the phase of creation, increases in that of use, expresses itself in the communicative phase through signs, which are not stable and far from plain, as they are employed within manifold histories – the results of environmental and human stratifications – and within the complex morphology of different styles and morals, values, symbols, relations and connections (Ibid., pp. 380-1).

I have dwelt extensively on these passages by Bronzini to illustrate those profound transformations in language and theoretical framework without which the study of popular culture could not have taken shape. Having forsaken a nineteenth-century approach, *Lares*

was finally projected towards contemporary anthropological debates. Moreover, this took place during an expansive phase for demology and anthropology. It should be taken into account that, in Italy, university studies underwent rapid and intense expansion in the 1970s. Social strata previously largely excluded from higher education were able to study at university level. Access was liberalised by the laws of 1961 and 1969, granting students coming from any secondary school the possibility to attend any university course. As a result, humanities and social science disciplines, previously open only to the elite, became objects of wider interest. Sociology and psychology, for example, achieved great prominence in academia. Anthropology and demology were less successful at occupying institutional space: nonetheless, courses in these fields multiplied and came to be present in most universities, especially in departments of letters and philosophy (humanities) and in what used to be called *Facoltà di Magistero* (today sciences of education/pedagogy). It is worth noting that 'popular culture' enjoyed significant currency in the 1970s even outside academia. Evidence of this are, among others: the emergence of 'folk' genres in youth cultures and in political protest; the use of oral sources, 'bottom-up history' and 'some kind of field research' in primary and secondary school curricula; or the proliferation of museums of rural culture within the competencies of local authorities' cultural policies.

In such a context, one would have expected *Lares* to become a point of reference for a new, wider scientific community, which was gathering around demology and cultural anthropology. Well, this didn't happen: or at least, it happened only to a limited extent. Overall, *Lares* held a reclusive, essentially isolated status. Bronzini, the editor, took charge of the journal with a firm hand, perhaps too firm. He surrounded himself with a team of close collaborators, all linked to his professorship at the University of Bari, including Elisa Miranda, who for a few years worked as editorial secretary. In fact, the journal entrenched itself in its academic-territorial domicile, the Institute of History of popular traditions of the University of Bari. Other existing affiliations dissolved: such as the one with the Italian Society of Ethnography, which had already become purely nominal, sort of a tribute to the past, when Toschi was at the helm of *Lares*; or they gradually lost meaning, as the minutes of the meetings with the Italian Federation of Popular Traditions attest, given less and less room and importance, until they ceased to be published entirely in 1984. [6]

Even more striking was the extent of Bronzini's personal commitment to *Lares*. Toschi, while editor of the journal from 1949 to 1972, had published 9 articles (including a few brief notes). Bronzini, from 1974 to 2002, would publish 160. With a quarterly output, it meant nearly two articles per issue on average, not including the reviews – often handled personally by Bronzini – that were sometimes short essays in themselves. A praiseworthy effort, but perhaps excessive as it made *Lares* look like a one-man show. Of course, Bronzini was at the time widely esteemed and had established a dense network of national and international relations. He simply wasn't concerned with turning *Lares* into the platform for a wider demological community. The journal stayed consistent to its own cultural line, centred on the philological-literary core of demology. Although in continuity with the Italian historicist tradition like Toschi, it also endeavoured to develop and modernise it through the



contribution of structuralism and semiotics, as well as Gramsci's and De Martino's works. He gathered around his project other scholars, such as – to name just a few – Vittorio Lanternari, Giuseppe Profeta, Sebastiano Lo Nigro, Giuseppe Bonomo, Giuseppe Šebesta, Amalia Signorelli and Enrica Delitala; he maintained relationships with eminent European ones, who occasionally contributed to *Lares*, such as the Swiss Rudolf Schenda, Hungarian Voigt Vilmos, German (Balkanologist) Dagmar Burkhart, Czechoslovakian Otakar Nahodil and the Romanian ethnomusicologist Emilia Comişel. In 1983, he organized an international conference in Apulia, associated with SIEF (Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore) and his Commission for the Study of Traditional Ballads. It saw the participation of several European scholars, mainly German-speaking. The proceedings were published as monographic issue of *Lares* (51 (4), 1985) with the title *Ballad and history*. In short, Bronzini was a very active and far from isolated scholar. Yet, *Lares* did not open up to collaborations with the research and teaching centres of anthropology and demology that had flourished in Italy. It may be helpful to draw a comparison with *La Ricerca Folklorica*, another demo-anthropological journal, founded in 1980 and directed by Glauco Sanga. A biannual journal, it was based on monographic issues, each curated by scholars from different schools. This meant that in the decade 1980-89, most Italian scholars – from different perspectives and generations – published in *La Ricerca Folklorica*, which in a short time became a major point of reference in the scientific community, an objective never fully achieved by *Lares*. Indeed, as the years went by, Bronzini's centralising style became ever more pronounced: the journal did not even display the composition of the editorial staff. Those among his students who played an important editorial role (besides the already mentioned Elisa Miranda, particularly Ferdinando Mirizzi and Vera Di Natale) [7] were never given due recognition and thus Bronzini failed to either put together a proper work team or create the conditions for his own succession.

## 5. The Anthropological and Cultural Heritage Phase

Giovanni Battista Bronzini died on March 11, 2002, of a sudden heart attack. *Lares* gave notice of it in issue 3 of 2001 (the time discrepancy was due to about one year of editorial delay), with a brief note by Vera Di Natale, one of Bronzini's students who had consistently collaborated with him. Di Natale took over the journal for the year 2002 issues, choosing to publish several of Bronzini's writings as a last homage. However, due to the personalisation of the direction of the journal, Bronzini had not left behind a structured work team at the University of Bari who would be capable of taking the reins of the publication. This led to the publisher Olschki, which also held the ownership of the journal (specifically, Alessandro and Daniele Olschki, who had formed close relationships of trust with Bronzini), to opt for a different solution: *Lares* was brought back to Florence, and its direction was entrusted to Pietro Clemente, who a few years before had become professor of cultural anthropology at the local University of Florence. Born in Nuoro in 1942, Clemente had been a pupil of Alberto M. Cirese (during the latter's years of teaching in Cagliari). He taught History of popular traditions in Siena and then, succeeding his teacher, cultural anthropology at Sapienza University of Rome. In 2001 he moved to Florence. His training had taken place within the

demological perspective and, concurrently, he had been influenced by 1960s and 1970s Marxist approaches: his earlier works were concerned with the thought of Franz Fanon and the history of so-called 1950s Italian 'debate on folklore', from a perspective that placed Gramsci and the more 'political' of De Martino's works at its centre (Clemente 1971, Clemente, Meoni, Squillacciotti 1976). Hence he concentrated on Tuscany's traditional peasant world, namely traditional peasant festivals, folk theatre, work and material culture (Clemente et al. 1980, Clemente, Fresta 1983). Above all, he directed his attention to the methodology of life stories and questions of ethnographic museography (Clemente, Rossi 1999; Clemente 2013): themes that have remained continuously and until today at the centre of his interests (Clemente was, among other things, the founder and long-time president of Simbdea, The Italian Society for Museum and Heritage Anthropology). However, from the late 1980s Clemente's theoretical approach started shifting radically, to encompass interpretive anthropology, postmodernism's 'discursive turn', experimental forms of ethnographic fieldwork and writing.

When he took over *Lares*, his profile could not be further from Bronzini's: whereas the latter was faithful to folkloric tradition and historical-philological methodology (although receptive to theoretical innovations), Clemente was chiefly interested in experimental ethnography, the advancement of subjective and unconventional sources, cultural hybridisation and new processes of patrimonialisation. Moreover, we should take into account that the impact of the demological approach – as shaped by Cirese and Bronzini in the 1960s and 1970s – started dwindling by the end of the century. Along with it, the concept of 'popular culture' lost its centrality. The reasons behind the crisis were to be found in certain contradictions within the very theoretical device on which demology had been based. On the one hand, reliance on Gramscian categories of thought had pushed towards a relational understanding of 'popular culture'. This was seen as a historically shifting relation between hegemonic and subordinated individuals and groups, which mutates along with social relations, means of production and models for the dissemination of culture. The advent of the culture industry and mass communications were among these transformations. On the other hand, the demologists envisioned maintaining continuity with past lines of enquiry, as they thought that a traditional, authentic repertoire of folklore (mainly of peasant origin) should not be indiscriminately confused with the outputs of mass culture. Precisely in the 1960s and 1970s, however, modernisation was bringing about the rapid disappearance of peasant traditions (if anything, re-appearing in the shape of cultural revival and 'heritage'); further, working class' cultural subalternity – to cite a case in point – could no longer be associated with a distinct form of folklore. Following Gramsci's analysis of subalternity would have necessarily led to dealing with mass culture consumption, a sphere disregarded by demology, which saw it as manifestation of widespread deculturation or (in accordance with the Frankfurt School's theorising) as an instrument of domination and colonization of 'the people'. An ethnography of mass culture was thus for a long time precluded as a topic for Italian ethnographers. It would have meant the possibility of analysing the caesura between hegemonic and subaltern within concrete forms of

consumption (e.g., as in the eminently Gramscian scientific programme of British cultural studies). Consequently, the very term 'demology' disappeared from Italian scholarly literature, making way for the expression 'anthropology of heritage', a field promoted internationally by UNESCO and associated with the valorisation of 'intangible culture'. It should also be considered that, since 1990, the reform of university teaching in Italy led to the introduction of 'Scientific-Disciplinary Sectors'. The (previously distinct) teachings of Cultural anthropology, Ethnology and History of popular traditions were thus combined into only one "sector". From then on, 'demology' has no longer been an autonomous category; its only trace today is the initial letter 'D' in the acronym of its sector classification, M-DEA / 01 - 'Demo-Ethno-Anthropological disciplines' (Dei 2012, 2018, cap. 5).

Pietro Clemente took over *Lares* within this framework. His first move was to add a subtitle to the journal's title: 'quarterly of demo-ethno-anthropological studies'. The important novelty did not lie in the frequency of the publication (from 4 to 3 issues per year, although the overall number of pages was about the same), but in the receptiveness to the whole disciplinary sector: the folkloric-philological vocation that had always characterized the journal (with the exception perhaps of the focus in the early years on an idea of 'ethnography' somehow closer to modern anthropology) was finally overcome. Another radical difference between Bronzini's and Clemente's direction was the latter's propensity for teamwork. Clemente set up a scientific committee and an editorial staff team, [8] whose compositions were changed in the 2013 volume [9] (in fact 2014, due to an enduring publishing delay). The extensive list of names consisted of Clemente's students, long-time collaborators as well as colleagues whose approaches varied greatly, evidence of his willingness to open up the journal to a variety of areas within Italian anthropology.

Another quality of the 2000s incarnation of *Lares* was the fact that it was organised in sections. Among these, the resumption of Paolo Toschi's *A veglia*, which now mainly carried subjective content, such as transcripts from oral sources, life stories, commemorative pieces on personalities from the intellectual scene as well as popular culture (sometimes juxtaposed, as in the first issue under Clemente's direction, with the profiles of Giuseppe Petronio and Dina Mugnaini, 'a great university scholar and a peasant woman from whom, at least in Tuscany, our studies have learned a lot' (Clemente 2003, p. 3; Dina Mugnaini is the protagonist of an oral autobiography that has gained paradigmatic value for the study of life stories; Di Piazza-Mugnaini 1983). 'Archivio' is a section on documents, such as epistolaries and writings of the founding fathers of Italian anthropology; 'Istituzioni e ricerche' is dedicated to museums and research centres operating in the field of ethnographic cultural heritage – including non-academic ones. Emblematic of Clemente's style was his reinterpretation of the ancient Roman myth of the Lares, based on a passage by Italo Calvino:

According to Calvino's interpretation – found in *Invisible Cities* with regards to the city of Leandra – the Lares "reside in the kitchen, preferably hiding under the pots or in the fireplace flue, or in the broom closet: they are part of the house and once the family who lived there has left, they stay with the new tenants'. Thus we hope to find them in the journal's

ideational kitchen, and between its pages, where we know they have always been (Clemente 2003, p. 4).

Unlike Bronzini, Clemente's contribution to *Lares* was very parsimonious. He engaged above all in service communications, editorials, introductions to monographic issues and commemorative pieces. His activity was above all palpable in the choice of collaborators and themes. The latter were very diversified, in some cases merging into monographic issues (as a rule, one out of three was a monograph). We can very roughly identify three types of contributions:

- a) critical reflections on intangible cultural heritage and related cultural policies (at regional and local level as well as in the international context of UNESCO);
- b) re-interpretations, in a contemporary key, of classical themes of popular culture studies, as exemplified by monographs on fairy tales (73-2 of 2007); human-animal relationships (74, 1 of 2008); folk festivals (75, 2 of 2009); with openness towards questions posed by neo-medieval festivals and historical re-enactments (79, 2-3 of 2013); to contemporary anthropological issues such as transactional migration (75, 3 of 2009); the treatment of asylum seekers in Europe (77, 1 of 2011); and everyday items and domestic material cultures (80.3 of 2014);
- c) historical analyses of the discipline that reconsider its key figures: from several commemorative contributions on Bronzini, to two monographs on Gramsci – reconsidered also in light of the application of his thought within cultural studies and postcolonial theory (74, 2 of 2008; 77, 3 of 2011; the latter commemorating the great Gramscian philosopher Giorgio Baratta); scholar of oral traditions like Gastone Venturini (70-2.3 of 2004); revisiting Pitre (volume 83, 1 of 2017), Loria (monographic issues 80, 1 of 2014; on Loria's legacy see also a volume of the series 'Biblioteca di Lares': Giunta 2019), as well as Cirese, with a focus on the effects of his demological reform ('La demologia come scienza normale?'; 81, 2-3 of 2015).

What set Clemente apart from *Lares*' previous editors was the choice to 'abdicate', as he gave up his role after retiring from university, while still maintaining an active role in the journal. In 2018, the journal's direction was entrusted to the author of this article – and naturally, that date sets the end of my synthetic historical reconstruction. But first, I would like to point out that today's *Lares* is different to its previous incarnations – which traversed a good part of the twentieth century – not only because of scientific approaches, research methodologies and theoretical predilections. It is also a simple matter of quantities. While *Lares* had for a long time been the only Italian demo-anthropological journal, or at least one of the very few, in the 1990s its field of enquiry was enriched by the appearance of several other publications. To date, considering only those awarded 'Class A' by ANVUR (the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems), there are at least 12 active demo-ethno-anthropological journals in Italy; to these should be added those interdisciplinary journals that publish anthropological articles on a regular basis; and still more who have not been awarded 'Class A' because they publish irregularly, or don't follow a peer-review process, but

are active nonetheless. [10] A proliferation such as this owes its occurrence to multiple factors, not least the ever-lowering costs of printing, all the more true for digital publications. Certainly the greater liveliness within the field of social sciences plays its part as well, with a growing number of aspiring scholars, in large proportions young, who have just obtained a Ph.D. and are caught in the publish-or-perish rationale. The downside is perhaps an excess of published material, while little is actually read. Many journals also lack proper distribution, and none is authoritative enough to become the ineluctable point of reference for the entire scholarly community. Moreover, in recent years this community has been weakening in terms of academic space and power (Palumbo 2018). In such a framework, *Lares'* challenge is that of differentiating itself through a recognizable profile and specific scientific programme. The direction it has taken in recent years can be described – following a definition given by a 2015 programme document – as 'post-demology': that is, the reframing of that specific tradition of studies on subordinate cultures that, starting from Gramsci, has deeply influenced the Italian anthropological field. The main points of this programme can be summarized thus:

- a) 'Taking a critical approach to the history and object of the discipline: that is, being aware of working in a field that is constituted as such historically and politically; consequently recognizing the need to practise not only an internal history of the studies (that is, a succession of writings, authors, theories and research), but also an external one, aimed at deciphering how intellectual groups position themselves socially, relate to institutions and power and devise strategies to achieve ethical and aesthetical distinction'.
- b) An alternative demarcation of the 'object' of post-demology: instead of 'natural' repertoires of folklore and intangible heritage, processes of folklorisation and patrimonialisation through which such repertoires have been, and still are, generated.
- c) Postdemology should also centre on "non-patrimonialised facets of culture: daily routines (regardless of explicit valorization, be it ethical or aesthetic), "piles of waste"; the aesthetics of bad taste; material and immaterial mass consumption, etc. Again, cultures that cannot undergo a constitutive process of patrimonialisation, because they cannot be articulated, are concealed, informal or secret".
- d) Recovering the categories of hegemony and subalternity, which leads to "analysing new dynamics of social inequality, for example those of marginalized groups, as well as instances of manifest and emerging conflict, as in the case of new social movements and power dynamics related to class, gender, generations, ethnicity".
- e) 'Relating more explicitly and systematically, at the international level, to traditions of study that have experienced an analogous "crisis of folklore", with resulting enrichment from research methodologies which are different to the global, mainstream tradition of anthropology (*Lares* 2015, pp. 203-4).

Surely the programme, as well as the hopes it expresses, are yet to be fully realised. Still, I

believe they give meaning to the tenacity of the journal, while simultaneously trying to keep up with the evolution of publishing forms and means of communication. Publisher Leo S. Olschki continues to firmly support the journal and attaches great importance to making it available in paper form. At the same time, *Lares* has become part of JSTOR digital library (<https://www.jstor.org/journal/lares> ; available in its entire collection from 1912 until 2015), is fully available for purchase on the Torrossa digital platform (<https://www.torrossa.com/it/>) and has its own website linked to the University of Pisa (<https://lares.cfs.unipi.it/> ), all of which are essential steps to stay relevant in the 21st century.

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[1] English translation by Jvan Yazdani.

[2] Among others, *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, *Revue d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie*, *L'Ethnographie* (*Bulletin de la Société d' Ethnographie de Paris*), *Anthropos*, *Revue internationale d'Ethnologie et de Linguistique*, *Revista Lusitana*, *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*, *Schweizer Volkskunde*, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, *Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde*, *Folklore*, *The Journal of American Folklore*.

[3] 'Andare a veglia' means 'to participate in a vigil'. The *veglia* was a widespread tradition among sharecropping peasants of central Italy: in the late-evening hours, family members gathered in the heat of the barn to exchange stories, gossip, folktales, popular songs. So it was the main moment of transmission of oral traditions.

[4] In addition to Toschi, who filled the position of Secretary, members of the Society were also folklorists Giuseppe Cocchiara, Giuseppe Vidossi, Vittorio Santoli, Raffaele Corso; historians of religions such as Raffaele Pettazzoni and Nicola Torchì; the physical anthropologist Sergio Sergi, the jurist Fulvio Maroi, the historian Pier Sylverio Leicht, the orientalist Carlo Conti Rossini and philologists such as Luigi Sorrento and Angelo Monteverdi (who was the Society's President).

[5] For example – to name just a few of the most prominent – the 1950s issues offer reviews of Arnold Van Gennep's works on contemporary French folklore, Stith Thompson's on fairy tales, Richard Weiss's and Leopold Schmidt's on Swiss and Austrian folklore respectively, Louis Dumont's (not yet known as an Indianist) on the set Provençal legends and rites around the legend of the Tarasque, Adolf Jensen's on myths and cults of 'primitive' peoples and Oskar Eberle's on folk theatre.

[6] For about a decade, from 1983 to 1992, the journal was also published with the title "Organo del Museo di Arti e Tradizioni Popolari del Gargano «G. Tancredi» di Monte Sant'Angelo" ('Organ of the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions of Gargano 'G. Tancredi' of Monte Sant'Angelo'): a local affiliation set up by Bronzini as museum consultant, convenient to provide funding for the journal, otherwise supported by research funds of CNR (National Research Centre) and the University of Bari itself.

[7] Personal communication by Ferdinando Mirizzi, whom I thank.

[8] The scientific committee comprised Alberto Mario Cirese, Giulio Angioni, Gianpaolo Gri, Elisa Miranda,

Cristina Papa, Leonardo Piasere, Paolo Sibilla; the editorial board was Emanuela Rossi (secretary assistant, later joined by Martina Giuffrè), Sandra Puccini (editor of the 'Archivio' section), Maria Federico (editor of the 'Istituzioni e ricerche' section, Maurizio Agamennone, Mariano Fresta, Maria Elena Giusti, Ferdinando Mirizzi, Fabio Mugnaini, Luisa Rubini, Filippo Zerilli.

[9] From 2013 the editorial board comprised Fabio Dei (vice director), Caterina Di Pasquale (editorial assistant), Elena Bachiddu, Paolo De Simonis, Antonio Fanelli, Maria Federico, Mariano Fresta, Martina Giuffrè, Maria Elena Giusti, Costanza Lanzara, Emanuela Rossi (later joined by Federico Melosi, Luigigiovanni Quarta and Lorenzo Urbano); the scientific committee was enriched by other members, mainly international, such as Dionigi Albera (CNRS France), Sergio Della Bernardina (Université de Bretagne Ouest), Daniel Fabre (EHESS, Paris), Angela Giglia (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, Mexico), Reinhard Johler (Universität Tübingen), Silvia Paggi (Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis) and Alessandro Simonicca (Sapienza University of Rome).

[10] In addition to *Lares: Antropologia, storia e scienze del linguaggio*; *Antropologia Pubblica* (Journal of Società Italiana di Antropologia Applicata); *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo*; *Archivio di Etnografia*; *Anuac* (Journal of Associazione Nazionale Universitaria degli Antropologi Culturali), *AM. Antropologia Medica* (Journal of SIAM, Società Italiana di Antropologia medica); *AM. Antropologia Museale* (Journal of SIMBDEA, Società Italiana per la Meseografia e i Beni Demoetnoantropologici); *Antropologia*; *Dada*; *Etnoantropologia* (Journal of SIAC, Società Italiana di Antropologia Culturale); *La Ricerca Folklorica* (Erreffe); *L'uomo. Società, tradizione, sviluppo*; *Voci*. Among the journals outside of the DEA sector classification, but publishing regularly anthropological issues, columns and monographs it is worth listing, at least: *Dialoghi mediterranei*, *Il de Martino* (Journal of IEDM-Istituto Ernesto De Martino), *Melissi*, *Meridiana*, *Palaver*, *Parolechiave*, *Studi culturali*.