

ABSTRACTS *Rivista di Studi Indo-Mediterranei XI (2021)*

Federico Salvaggio, *Vernacular Reconsidered: Dante and the Islamic Linguistic Tradition*

Abstract In the *De vulgari eloquentia* Dante illustrates his reasons for writing in vernacular instead of Latin, a language that in his day was recognized as the uncontested vehicle for learning and culture. About the same time, late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, within the Islamic civilization, where Arabic enjoyed a unique prestige as the sacred language of the Koranic revelation, a process of vernacularization of Islamic teachings progressively unfolds entailing the usage of vulgar languages for the composition of religious texts. Exploring the conception of vernacular as *locutio naturalis*, and as such directly descending from the primordial language of man, will enable us not only to establish a parallel between Dante's vision of vulgar language and the Islamic one, but also to shed light on the explicit and implicit premises that justified the ennoblement of vernaculars vis-à-vis Latin and Arabic (or Persian) in the respective medieval cultural contexts.

Keywords Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, Arabic linguistic tradition, Islamic linguistic thought, Sufism

Ephraim Nissan, *Excessive Food Intake and Fatness, as Viewed through the (Variable) Lens of Jewish Cultures (in 3 Parts)*

Abstract Part 1 This is the first part of a study consisting of a sequence of three articles, concerned with how overeating or fatness were viewed in Jewish cultures through the ages. In this first part, we include two thematic clusters, each consisting of several sections. The first cluster is concerned with how instances of the overarching subject appear in the Hebrew Bible, as well as "Talmudic Lore about Obesity", which is the title of Ch. 12. The second cluster is concerned with rabbinic religio-legal norms about overeating, from late antiquity (when the concern was with hired labour's eating rights at harvest, and excess), to the present.

Key words Diet; overeating; fatness; obesity; body size; Hebrew Bible; Judaism; food, culture and society.

Abstract Part 2 *Excessive Food Intake and Fatness, as Viewed through the (Variable) Lens of Jewish Cultures, II: (A) Geographic Relativity of Body Size Ideals; (B) Between Medical Advice (Maimonides) and Online Jewish Self-Help Advice: A Blend with Their Respective Historical-Cultural Environment* Abstract: This is the second part of a series of three articles, concerned with how overeating or fatness were viewed in Jewish cultures through the ages. In this second part, we include two thematic clusters of sections. The first clusters, which includes two sections, we show how body size ideals varied, even during the same historical period, in different geographical and cultural contexts: recent research has discussed the fact that until the early 20th century, brides-to-be belonging to Tunisia's Twansa Jewish community (as opposed to the other Jewish community in Tunisia, whose ancestors came from Livorno) used to be fattened; this has (non-Jewish) parallels in the Maghreb, and we mention in particular Mauritania. The second thematic cluster included in this paper is dietetic advice against overeating, as early as the medieval Maimonides (a famous physician and philosopher who in Judaism is authoritative as a ritualist and codifier) to present-day Jewish religious popularisation webpages intended to combat overeating (these tend to cite Maimonides as an authority), but one also comes across vegetarianism being promoted at some Jewish website.

Key words Diet; overeating; fatness; obesity; body size; cultural relativity; ideals of beauty; Judaism; Tunisian Jews; Tunisia; Mauritania; Maimonides; medical popularisation; online self-help advice; food, culture and society.

Abstract Part 3 This is the third part of a series of three papers, concerned with how overeating or fatness were viewed in Jewish cultures through the ages. In this third and last part, we discuss the subject the way it was represented in Hebrew in the belles lettres, both in the Middle Ages and (in Agnon's narrative) in the 20th century. The medieval literary texts considered are the Life of Ben Sira, and the Book of Delight by Joseph Ibn Zabara, a physician satirizing the medical advice of physicians.

Key words Hebrew literature (medieval, modern); S.Y. Agnon; Joseph Ibn Zabara; Life of Ben Sira; dietary norms in Judaism; overeating; gluttony; eating freak shows; gastronomic utopias; food, culture and society; smoking (historically changing medical opinions); bull-riding cultural hero (Joshua); satire.

Aelfric Bianchi, *Il riflesso di māyā. Appunti sul cinema indiano*

Summary Antinaturalistic, all oriented not so much toward a realism of the particular but toward a secret and secretive universal reality, deliberately oscillating, on the basis of a very ancient preceptology, between pastime and teaching, between gratification and didactics, Indian popular cinema (so-called Bollywood) is based on a peculiar "gastronomic aesthetic" from which descends an equally original "culinary poetics": the big screen is a kind of table set by refined gourmets, offering every delicacy, but leaving it up to the diners to choose the dishes to be tasted, the sequence, the pace, the manner and timing of tasting. Its "gastronomic" character, however, does not exclude, but rather presupposes, a surprising complexity: its roots are in fact in a millennia-old tradition of unsuspected "nobility" and excellence, ranging from Sanskrit dramaturgy to classical epic, from Nāṭyaśāstra to love lyric, from figurative arts to ghazal, from nautanki to Parsi theater, which is considered its direct ancestor.

Keywords Bollywood, Indian cinema, popular cinema, India, commercial cinema, Indian culture, East and West

Minoo Mirshahvalad, *I gruppi sciiti in Italia. La nascita e l'evoluzione*

Summary. This brief historical review of the Shiite presence in Italy is part of an extensive sociological study carried out in 13 Italian cities between 2016 and 2019, as part of which 89 people (including 32 women), encountered at places of worship or gathering places of Shiite groups, were interviewed. Alongside the interviews, the author used participant observation for ethnography. This text is limited to answering two interrelated aspects of a question: when and why did Shiites come to Italy and regroup? In order to answer this question, the author will first consider the peninsula's first contacts with Shiites, the reasons for the formation and multiplication of Shiite conglomerates, and finally devote space to the Iranian student groups that played a key role in the early stages of Shiite activism in contemporary Italy. The author would like to make it clear that by 'Shiites,' from the modern period onward, she means exclusively those who identify with the majority branch of Shiism, namely the Duodecimans.

Table of Contents 1. Historical and geographical profile of the Shiite population. 2. The formation of organizations. 3. Territorial distribution, problems and splits in Italian Shiite communities. 4. Shiite student associations in Italy. 5. Latest developments. Conclusions. Bibliography. Danielle

Buschinger, *Richard Wagner und William Shakespeare. Das Liebesverbot als Bearbeitung von Maß für Maß*

Abstracts This article examines the genesis of the little-known opera *Das Liebesverbot*, premiered in Magdeburg in 1836 under Wagner's musical direction. Following suggestions by Heinrich Laube and Wilhelm Heinse, representatives of the Junges Deutschland movement, Wagner discovers Shakespeare's *Maß für Maß*, whereupon he decides to write the new opera, which is to be understood as an adaptation of this play. This can thus be interpreted as an excellent example of the method that will characterize all his operas from the *Flying Dutchman* onward.

Key words Richard Wagner; William Shakespeare; Young Germany; Syncretism

Emiliano Laurenzi, *Rappresentazioni mediatiche. Il caso dei Taleban*

Summary This short essay seeks to propose a mode of study that analyzes how the media produce and set up perception, and the political reach of this process. Polarization, irrationality, the collapse of contexts, the apparent dictatorship of the present, echo chambers and filter bubbles. These are some of the effects of a media regime that must first be contextualized diachronically, ginning up its apparent ahistoricity and defusing the mechanisms that entice, enchant and manipulate our perceptual and cognitive capacities. I have chosen the media representation of the Taliban because it is an effective example for identifying the points of attack from which to begin to rethink the method of media analysis.

Keywords media, perception, method, representation, Taliban, hybrid warfare, experience, consumption

Lidia Corna, *Rivisitare la presunta iconoclastia islamica: il caso di Warangal*

Abstracts This paper is directed toward an investigation of the phenomenon of conversion of sacred sites and reuse of spolia from desecrated Hindu temples by Muslims during the period of the Islamic conquest of the Indian subcontinent. The paper is structured in three sections, which provide a gradual approach to the topic of in-depth art-history dedicated to the Warangal Mosque, which arose in the Deccan of the 14th century, a period during which the Muslim Khalji and Tughlaq dynasties of the Sultanate expanded their domains to southern India. Historiographically, phenomena such as desecration and reuse of spolia were primarily interpreted as acts of iconoclasm, as well as violent attacks by an aniconic religion such as Islam on an idolatrous religion and its religious structures as overflowing with sacred icons, while eluding, often, what are instead the regional and historical differences in destructive acts. Only secondarily are sometimes traced and analyzed the sociopolitical circumstances under which the destruction of structures and images occurs.

Keywords. Reuse, spolia, iconoclasm, Indo-Islamic architecture, mosques of conquest, India

Nasser Ismail *Riflessioni sulle ripercussioni della peste in ambito burocratico, accademico e culturale durante il periodo mamelucco*

Abstract The plague was one of the most relevant phenomena that deeply shook medieval Muslim society. It is still difficult to measure the extent of its impact and draw an exhaustive picture in relation

to the many fields it affected, especially the cultural, academic, and bureaucratic ones. The present article aims to contribute to the literature on this theme during the Mamluk period by focusing on the analysis of the effects that the plague had on the professional and cultural life of *'ulamā'* and bureaucrats, as well as on Mamluk schools in Egypt and Syria.

Contents. Introduzione. 1. Cancelleria e magistratura in tempi di epidemia. 2. Ripercussioni sulla scuola. 3. Viaggi di studio tra le due rive del Mar Rosso: in fuga dal morbo. 4. Effetti sulla cultura, sui libri e sulla ricerca. 5. L'autonarrazione al tempo della peste. Conclusioni. Bibliografia

Giuseppe Cecere, *Egyptian Sufis and the State of Medina: A Case Study on Islamic Civil State*

Abstract In the aftermath of the 'Arab Spring' and the 'Tahir Revolution' (2011), Sufis (Muslim mystics) proved to be still a major intellectual and social force in contemporary Egypt, and many of the official and non-official Sufi Ways (*turuq*; sing. *ṭarīqa*) active in the country proposed their own answers to the "demands of the Revolution" (*maṭālib al-thawra*). In this framework, the State-run Supreme Council for Sufi Ways was able to join a flexible "day by day" tactics not to be overcome by the revolutionary process - thus opening up to dialogue with different political players - as well as to elaborate a long-term strategy, mostly in cooperation with al-Azhar, in order to play a leading role in shaping post-revolutionary Egypt. The present paper aims at paving the way for future in-depth analysis of such complex process, by presenting a single but crucially important case study: the debate on the best form of State in Islam that was published in *Al-ṭaṣawwuf al-islāmī* ("Islamic Sufism"), the official monthly magazine of the Supreme Sufi Council, in such a delicate moment as July 2012, when the political scene was apparently dominated by their longtime enemies the Muslim Brothers. This will hopefully provide some fresh insights into the Egyptian Sufi Council's long-term ideological orientations, with special focus on ideas on what should be the proper relationships between "religion" and "world" (*dīn wa-dunyā*) in Islam.

Keywords Egypt, Sufism, Supreme Council for Sufi Ways, Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi groups, constitutional debates in post-revolutionary Egypt (2011-2014), notions of "civil State", "Islamic State", "secular State".