

Recensione in uscita su Parergon

Calzona, Arturo & Lamberini, Daniela (Eds.), *La Civiltà delle Acque, tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: Atti del Convegno internazionale, Mantova, 1-4 Ottobre 2008* (Centro Studi L.B. Alberti, Ingenium No.14), Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 2010; paperback; pp. xviii-718 (two volumes); 11 figures in the text, 72 b/w illustrations, 11 colour plates; €78.00 (plus P&P); ISBN 978 88 222 59691 1.

Almost all the thirty six papers read at this ‘pluridisciplinary’ conference on a fascinating array of topics relating (mainly) to the rivers and waters of Italy’s *Val Padana* appear in these proceedings. Daniela Lamberini introduces the contributions while Salvatore Ciriaco’s concluding remarks sketch the opportunities for further research opened by the presenters and the discussions. Given the variety of topics and the unusual theme, no single reviewer can possibly comment authoritatively on all facets of the dazzling kaleidoscope presented in these volumes. Readers will leaf through to materials relevant to their own individual fields of study of course but they should not resist being tempted to sample many of the offerings in this interesting collection produced by leading scholars from Italy, Europe, Israel, Japan, USA, and, last but not least, Australia.

The proceedings are arranged under five broad headings:

1.0 Letteratura, e immaginario has contributions on relevant texts and ideas in Virgil (Georgics, Aeneid and Eclogues), Dante (*Commedia*), Leonardo’s theories on the flow of water and its place in his vision of the structure of the cosmos and Pirro Ligorio’s as yet unpublished treatise on the properties of running waters (in rivers, springs, lakes and so on).

2.0 Gestione politica ed economia examines legal, administrative and political issues during medieval and early modern times as well as the economic importance of water to agriculture and transport etc., principally in Mantua, Cremona and Tuscany.

3.0 Arte, architettura, paesaggio e territorio brings together studies of the sources for the impact of the rivers on the various communities of the Po Valley over the centuries, artists who depicted the waters of Tuscany, Leonardo’s post 1482 texts on the behaviour of flowing water in Lombardy, an analysis of the building of the fountain of Neptune in Bologna (commenced in 1563) and the instructions for its maintenance, the efforts of the Medici dukes of Tuscany to control the Arno and an account of the way in which water from the aqueducts of Rome was administered, bought, sold and traded from the 1560’s onwards.

4.0 Ingegneria, infrastrutture, scienza e tecnica concentrates on theoretical and practical aspects of hydraulics, its associated technology and important technological advances in Bologna, Venice and Ferrara, Italian thermal springs in the Renaissance and the achievements of the Bertalozzo family of military and hydraulic engineers in Mantua

5.0 *Giardini, feste e spettacoli* describes the use of the Arno as a vehicle for spectacle from 1305 onwards, a pyrotechnical display on the Rhine at Dusseldorf in 1585, a C17th notebook describing the spectacles of Rome in which water played an important part and, most important, an account of the sources for the history of spectacle in Mantua from 1480 to 1630 which is being collected from archives all over Europe by the '*Progetto Herla*' of Mantova's *Capitale Europea dello Spettacolo* Research Institute [www://capitalespettacolo.it/ita/heral/asp (April 2011)]

Besides their interest as a collection of scholarly articles directed at a common theme, these volumes can provide not easily otherwise available material that is relevant to research in other fields. In my case, research on the development of the Borgo Pio and its fortifications in Rome under Pius IV (1559-1565) led me into issues relating to Rome's floods, drainage, drinking water and the politics of the city's water supply. Katherine Rinne's article in these proceedings (followed by her book *The Waters of Rome* just published by Yale) helped resolve a number of important questions for me. They can also provide unsuspected or unexpected insights. Giuseppe Adami's paper for example throws fascinating light on the cultural interests of P.P. Floriani who is better known as a military engineer. I am sure many other scholars will make similar 'finds'!

Roger Vella Bonavita,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Western Australia
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