

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

Niccolò Caramel, “Terrible Mountains”. Migration and Demography in the Tesino Valley in the Early Modern Period (17th–18th centuries)

This paper focuses on Tesino, a valley in the alpine region of Trentino affected by a high rate of migration in the early modern era, mainly related to the itinerant trade in Europe of flintstones and prints. Impulses for these migration movements were limited natural resources and precarious economic conditions, as well as the concrete prospects for earnings from foreign trade. During the eighteenth century, however, the peddlers became heavily indebted to the printmakers from whom they purchased prints, which caused a marked deterioration in their general circumstances. The result was, on the one hand, an increase in mortality and, on the other hand, an increase in the number of people engaged in itinerant trade, because they were forced to try and restore family finances. Consequently, the demographic variables in Tesino did not play a pivotal role in migration patterns, but the activities undertaken during migration certainly did have a strong impact on local demographics.

Liliana De Venuto, The Postal Service in Ancien Régime Rovereto and its Postmasters

The postal station in Rovereto was one of the centres for the collection and sorting of mail along the imperial postal route connecting Innsbruck and Mantua. It was established in the first decades of the sixteenth century and entrusted to postmasters who guaranteed a regular service through the Lagarina Valley to Mantua and from Rovereto to Lake Garda. At the stations set up by these postmasters, there worked grooms, couriers, and relay teams, while other postmen worked at the smaller, interim stations along the way. The postmasters at the main office in Rovereto were nominated by the head postmaster stationed in Innsbruck, from whom they received their emoluments. Initially, appointments were on a temporary basis, but following a decision taken by Empress Maria Theresa, the nomination became a kind of fief that was transmissible to family descendants. Subsequently, holders of the position included Giovanni Simoncini, the baron Matteo Cresseri, and the families de Benedetti, Cosmi, and Bossi Fedrigotti. The latter family continued to run the communication and service network, including the transport of people and mail, up until the First World War. After the end of the conflict, the service and its infrastructure was taken over by the Kingdom of Italy.

Thomas Götz, Rematerializing Cities: Perspectives on the Potential of Account Books as Sources for the Environmental History of pre-industrial Towns

The article explores the possibilities of investigating hitherto little used urban account books as sources for a socio-ecological history of pre-industrial towns. The social metabolism of such towns can be understood as the outcome of a process of material and energetic exchange within an agrarian society ultimately maintained by solar resources. Through a critical source analysis, the author illustrates this situation by looking at the utilization of land in three towns in Franconia, which were administrative centres and characterized by a large number of citizens drawing their main income from agriculture (*Ackerbürgerstadt*). In doing so, special attention is paid to the municipally owned communal woods. All things considered, the article constitutes a theoretical contribution to a re-materialization of urban history, a field that has in many respects been influenced in a rather one-sided manner by the ‘cultural turn’. Understood as the interplay between symbolic forms, ‘culture’ can nevertheless only be adequately comprehended and interpreted within the framework of social spaces that are clearly defined by their social metabolism.