Values and traditions of South Australian Italian migrants from Caulonia (Calabria)

Daniela Cosmini-Rose

(Abstract)

To what extent do South Australian Italian migrants from Caulonia (Calabria) maintain their cultural practices and traditions in everyday life in Adelaide, Australia? This is one of the main questions that this paper aims to explore.

Cauloniese migration is particularly interesting because of the proportionately large percentage of arrivals in South Australia. Among the Australian states, South Australia was by far the preferred destination of the cauloniesi, followed by Western Australia and Victoria.

Caulonia is an ancient village of Greek origins perched high on a hilltop, situated in the Calabria region, one hundred and twenty-one kilometres north-east of Reggio Calabria and sixty-four kilometres south of Catanzaro (the capital city of the Calabria region).

Agriculture has been for centuries the primary means of subsistence of the whole village, and still today it plays a major role in its economy. The primary agricultural products are citrus fruits, cereals, olives and vegetables. The industrial sector is particularly weak because of the lack of investments, and the unemployment rate is higher than the national average.
There is not a family in Caulonia that does not have one or more relatives who have migrated either to northern Italy or to other countries such as Australia, the USA, Canada, Argentina, Venezuela or France. Due to migration, the town’s population has steadily declined from a peak of 13,838 in 1921 to just 7,756 in 2001.

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century the migration stream from Caulonia was mainly directed to North and South America, whereas in the post second world war period the most prominent destination was Australia, which absorbed 69 per cent of the Cauloniese migrants, followed by the USA (17 per cent) and Argentina (13 per cent).

Between 1927 and 1940, among the Italian towns Caulonia was the Calabrian town with the highest number of migrants settling in South Australia, and in the post-war period, between 1947 and 1970, with 1,364 migrants, Caulonia was the Italian town most represented in South Australia. Between 1927 and 1940, Caulonia, with 87 migrants, was numerically the highest ranked Calabrian town in South Australia. Due to chain migration, in the post-war period, Caulonia, with 1364 migrants, is not only the most represented Calabrian town, but is also the town that of the whole of Italy has given the highest number of Italian settlers to SA.

The cauloniesi in Adelaide are a well-known and enterprising Italian community that is interested in the maintenance of its traditions, with a solid attachment to its roots and homeland. In my paper I aim to explore how the migration experience has impacted on some socio-cultural customs of the

Rose, Daniela 2006. Values and traditions of South Australian Italian migrants from Caulonia (Calabria). 'Migration of Cultures Symposium', 10-13 April. Flinders University. [abstract].
Archived at Flinders University: dspace.flinders.edu.au
Cauloniese migrants in South Australia, such as family structure, engagement and wedding practices. In my paper I will present the findings of a number of interviews conducted with first-generation *cauloniesi* in South Australia and in Caulonia itself. I will be looking at particular questions such as how do first generation Cauloniese migrants maintain family values? How do they practise their engagements and weddings in Australia today? What aspects of these Italian-Cauloniese cultural practices, which were followed before migrating, have been maintained and which have been discarded over time or adapted to the Australian cultural values? Do the *cauloniesi* in South Australia display a stronger attachment to their cultural background and to their traditions than do Italians who live in Caulonia today and who never migrated?