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BRUNO PELLE // Le Voci di Antonimina

(The timestamps align with the start of the video)

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:44,170

In the evening, when we were a family, we would gather at one house or another and stay together. Then there were the old people who surrounded us with stories, phenomenal stories. And now, who tells you a story anymore? Nobody. Now we have cell phones, we sit there and don't even look at the person in front of us. I started, let's say, working in the hotel industry; I was a waiter, a bit of a cook, then I worked as a bartender at a bar in Locri, did my military service, and after that?

00:00:44,210 --> 00:01:30,090

So I ended up going to the mountains to work as a forestry worker. Now it's called Calabria Verde. As I remember, we were about 3,000 inhabitants. Then in '60 there was emigration to the North, because many shepherds who had their flocks were tenant

farmers, and on the land back then, the prince came to say to go to Antonimina... he wanted to sell part of it, part of it he took over for forestry.

00:01:30,120 --> 00:02:25,090

So these people, having nowhere left to graze or cultivate land, left for the North, and their lives began to change from then on. Then many people chose to work as laborers or nurses, or get hired in forestry. We had up to 200 people employed in forestry, and regarding livestock, I remember that those who had the means also kept livestock in the mountains during the winter, and then in the summer we did the transhumance down to the lower areas to bring the animals.

00:02:25,110 --> 00:03:06,110

And by early April, let's say, they stayed in the lower areas all summer, then in the winter they went up to the mountains and moved west, taking everything with them. They had pack animals—donkeys and mules—to transport the equipment for making cheese and ricotta. And back then I would watch these transhumances pass by, just like in Northern Italy, and that's how life went on. I remember this when I was a boy.

00:03:06,130 --> 00:03:50,030

But back then, every shepherd watched over his own animals. There were no barbed wire fences or other enclosures; everyone watched their animals on their own land. Now, on the other hand, it's completely different: they keep a few, but they keep them fenced in. It's different. Things have completely reversed. Everything has changed. Shepherdry has vanished.

00:03:50,050 --> 00:04:43,040

The birth rate too. Families are no longer like they used to be—large, with many children where everyone did a job. Now birth rates are practically down to zero. And so many young people are leaving Calabria, not just to go anywhere, but because there are no jobs—neither private nor public sector. I remember we used to produce...

00:04:43,060 --> 00:04:49,200

Broom (local plant), I remember when they used to process it in the river.

00:04:49,220 --> 00:04:51,090

Silk—I remember silk production, though I don't remember the processing because they didn't do it right here, but many produced silk and had mulberry trees for the leaves, because silkworms feed on mulberry leaves. And flax—I remember my family used to process it and make cloth, just like broom fiber in Antonimina, spinning it into thread. Wool too, they worked wool even more than the rest. And I remember three elderly women who brought cheese and ricotta to sell in Locri; they went by bus, and one of the ricotta containers was left parked there.

00:05:59,290 --> 00:06:01,230

And now…

This is all gone. Now everything is different: transport is done by vehicle, with refrigerated trucks. Family traditions have remained mostly the same: when the pig is butchered, we produce our own salami, cure it ourselves, but always at a family level, not for commercial trade. These traditions we still keep, like tomatoes—we make tomato sauce and other preserves ourselves.

00:06:56,270 --> 00:06:59,120

We maintain them like this.

Few traditions remain. Nobody bakes bread at home anymore; it's all bought from the shop. Before, every single family made bread, and we cultivated wheat. Every family grew wheat and had guaranteed bread for the whole year, and we made our own olive oil too. Those who didn't have trees would buy a portion of olives, harvest them, and make oil. Those who couldn't afford land worked as sharecroppers for landowners, cultivating for the owners and for themselves. In dialect we called them *tallonari*. Everything was grown along the rivers, where many plots were cultivated.

00:08:22,180 --> 00:08:52,200

They diverted water from the river, and everyone grew corn, vegetables, tomatoes, peppers—everything these lands could yield. Starting from the thermal baths, which

have great waters for therapeutic treatments...

00:08:52,230 --> 00:08:53,200

We have two health centers: one smaller and one larger, offering therapies. I can even name them: one is Villa Vittoria, the other Sant'Anna. Then we have a couple of farms producing cheese, two local butcher shops that slaughter local animals, and a pomegranate farm. Life has changed because in the past there weren't all these taxes and costs, so...

00:09:50,180 --> 00:10:42,240

There were families who sustained themselves purely on livestock because there were no heavy taxes. People lived without money, but nothing was lacking because everything was produced locally. Very little was bought outside the village. Now nobody grows vegetables anymore; you don't see corn fields anymore, whereas back then we raised pigs with our own homegrown corn.

00:10:42,260 --> 00:10:43,260

Now, no. Now we buy almost everything commercially—corn, wheat, almost everything comes from outside. Nowadays we go grocery shopping in supermarkets. In the old days, in January, there were four or five, even more small shops selling groceries, taverns selling wine and drinks, two cobblers with apprentices, and tailors—women sewing for women, men for men—and blacksmiths (*foggiani*).

00:12:02,070 --> 00:12:03,040

Now those shops are gone; only one remains, whereas back then every step in town had a shop because there were 3,000 residents.

00:12:21,220 --> 00:12:22,060

Now they've closed down because we are barely a thousand people in the whole municipality, with so many abandoned, closed houses.

00:12:37,220 --> 00:12:40,260

Now along the road you find one or two occupied houses—1%, no longer 100%. Since this was an agricultural village, everyone had a means of transport: a mule, a donkey, or a horse. Many kept animals right inside the village, with the stable below and the living quarters above.

00:14:04,230 --> 00:14:19,090

They didn't have to go far in the morning to get them and go to the fields; everything

00:14:19,110 --> 00:14:20,150

Now that's gone. Nobody has those animals anymore. Now there are tractors; everything has changed.

And yet it was beautiful...

because we helped each other among neighbors and relatives. If someone needed help one day, you went to them, and the next day they came to you. There was more respect between people...

which no longer exists. Now we pass each other on the street and don't even know who we're looking at.

00:15:54,160 --> 00:16:03,230

In the past, we'd meet in the street, greet each other, ask "How are you? How is the family doing?"

That was the beautiful thing about back then.

00:16:09,020 --> 00:16:40,090

Now, no—we don't even look at each other. Between driving cars and looking at cell phones, dialogue is dead. Dialogue is over. Today, you have to expect anything because things change from one year to the next. Things used to change over a

decade; now they change in a single year.

00:16:40,110 --> 00:17:31,030

You go to bed at night, and when you wake up in the morning, everything is different. For young people today, unless things change—not just in Antonimina, but across other rural towns—we're all in the same boat. Agricultural towns have no major development.

00:17:31,050 --> 00:17:52,010

Along the Riviera, starting from Roccella down the coast, there are hardly four or five hotels despite having such a beautiful sea.

In places like Locri, apart from four shops, nothing productive remains. Yet this region could be very wealthy through tourism. If tourism flourished along the coast, agricultural inland towns like ours could supply hotels and restaurants with local produce, instead of importing everything.

00:18:38,070 --> 00:19:03,140

That's why there is no secure future for Antonimina and neighboring towns—there's no unified vision. I once went to Amantea and Scalea on June 20th, and one hotel alone already had 1,000...

beachgoers, and...

the hotels there stand side-by-side—and it's still Calabria! Here in Locri, I don't see development like that. Tourism here could thrive; we have beautiful historic towns like Gerace, but houses sit abandoned because the elderly died, the young emigrated, and they only return briefly during summer holidays.

00:20:00,080 --> 00:20:42,260

I remember so many houses that were once full of life, now locked up and falling apart on their own. Abandoned. My parents used to tell me about the 1951 flood that claimed lives. People living in the mountains lost their shelters to landslides, and lives were lost.

00:20:42,260 --> 00:21:29,140

I think two people died in one family—a parent and child. I remember below where I lived as a youth, about a hundred meters away, we had vegetable gardens. Down below, a small bridge got clogged with tree branches from landslides. Before it cleared, a lake formed less than 50 meters from our house. My parents told me about it.

00:21:29,140 --> 00:22:16,200

It washed away all the gardens and plants in '51. Then on the night of December 31, 1972 entering 1973, we lived through another one: a landslide occurred right below our house, and we were evacuated for two months. I experienced that flood firsthand.

These are memories that aren't pleasant. On the other hand, I fondly remember the religious processions: Saint Nicholas in May—organized by farmers and shepherds—and the regular one in December, as well as Saint Rocco in August. It was wonderful with traditional songs and folklore. During the procession, paper money was pinned onto the saint's banner with safety pins.

00:23:20,090 --> 00:24:18,090

Before paper money, offerings were given in kind: olive oil, wheat, cheese. That was collected for the church. To organize the festival and bring in music bands, young people went door to door collecting family donations. During the May procession of Saint Nicholas, people carried sacks of grain on their backs or goatskin containers (*lucertra*) filled with oil.

00:24:18,110 --> 00:24:45,270

And cheese in sacks too. When these containers filled up, they emptied them at the church and resumed the procession route. Seeing these traditions was wonderful for us as kids.

00:24:45,270 --> 00:25:11,240

At twelve years old, I was already plowing the fields with oxen—not at thirty like young people today, who study until thirty before working. In those families, learning came naturally because you were present; parents didn't need to explicitly tell children what to

do.

Because you were there, watching what your parents did. I remember my father helping slaughter pigs for neighbors and relatives.

And I went with him.

When he passed away, I had to step into his shoes.

And he hadn't formally taught me. Simply watching him was enough.

And then I did it myself directly, without anyone having to instruct me, because we were always present for everything that was done. We didn't need formal instruction from parents or uncles, because relatives were always united and helped one another.