



I.S.T.A.

Memento mori

*Ritualità, immagine e immaginario
della morte nelle Alpi*





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Agosto 2018

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Ritualità, immagine e immaginario della morte nelle Alpi

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ABSTRACTS

1. THE PURGATORY AND THE RISE OF MACABRE

The contribution intends to illustrate briefly the reason of the great diffusion of the macabre theme in the 14th and 15th century as a consequence of the success of purgatory. The representation of the personified death had the purpose of inculcating fear to the faithfuls to force them to think of the afterlife.

2. TRIUMPHS OF DEAD AND DANSE MACABRE AMONG VALLE CAMONICA AND SEBINO: THE LATE 15th CENTURY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHURCHES IN BIENNO, PISOGNE AND ISEO

There are four macabre-themed representations between Valle Camonica and Lake Iseo dating back to the end of the 15th century. Three can be traced back to the type of *Triumph of Death*: in Bienno in the church of santa Maria Annunciata, in Pisogne in both the churches of santa Maria *in silvis* and santa Maria della neve (the latter - also called *Dogma of the Death* - is lost, but reproduced in a drawing and through photographs). The fourth is a *Danse macabre* painted in the church of san Silvestro in Iseo. The present work intends to analytically examine the figures represented and provide an historical and artistic picture of the period in which they were made.

3. THE DEATH-THEMED FRESCOS ON THE ORATORY OF DISCIPLINI IN CLUSONE

This article describes the cycle of frescoes dedicated to the figure of the Death in Clusone; each section of the painting is examined both separately and in relation to the others. Accompanying this description there is also a short historical and artistic overview, and some possible artistic explanations.

4. DEATH REPRESENTATIONS OF CASNIGO, COLZATE, CASSIGLIO AND VERTOVA IN THE PROVINCE OF BERGAMO

The article has the aim to illustrate the theme of death in the province of Bergamo, focusing on the artistic representations of the Last Judgment from the Holy Trinity in Casnigo, the Dance macabre on the external wall of the church of San Bartolomeo in Cassiglio, the macabre-themed painting on the house Milesi in Cassiglio, the Last Judgment of the sanctuary of St. Patrick in Colzate and the Last Judgment anciently represented in the old cemetery of Vertova.

5. THE DANSE MACABRE OF CARISOLO AND PINZOLO IN TRENTINO

In the upper Val Rendena, in western Trentino, Italy, there are two *Danse macabre* of particular interest. They are both by Simone II Baschenis (1495-1555), a

painter belonging to a family of itinerant artists of Bergamo origin. The *Danse* frescoed on the southern wall of the church of santo Stefano of Carisolo and it is dated 1519. The one in Pinzolo, best preserved, is dated 1539. The pattern of the dances is similarly divided into three parts: in the first part three skeletons play old instruments inviting to the dance of the death a long procession of characters each one accompanied by a threatening and mocking skeleton. In Carisolo Christ the Redeemer and Christ on the cross in Pinzolo follows them to underline that death also struck him, before the resurrection. In the central part a procession of characters, associated with a skeleton, is strictly presented in a hierarchical scale starting from the religious authorities: a pope, a cardinal, a bishop, a priest, a friar. These ones are followed by the secular powers: from the emperor, to the king, to the queen, to the duke, to a warrior completing with more bourgeois figures like a miser, an elegant young man, a doctor, a gentlewoman. At the end there are indigent persons like a lame man, a nun, an old woman and a child. The third part is represented by death, on a winged horse, which throws arrows against the *morituri* (who are about to die) and it tramples those who have already been hit. In the dance of Pinzolo the painter closes with a confrontation between san Michele and the Devil who are competing for the souls.

6. IN REMEDIUM ANIMAE SUAE. FRESCOS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOUL IN VALLE CAMONICA BETWEEN 14th AND 15th CENTURY

The present dissertation examines the iconography of the *commendatio animae*, the recommendation of the soul, in a few 14th-16th frescoes of the Valle Camonica area, in order to analyze their iconography and their function in the liturgical space of the church. Valle Camonica frescoes of the commendation animae can be divided in two different categorizations: the collective *commendatio animae*, particularly dear to the members of the Confraternities of Penitents, and the individual commendation animae, in which the donor is portrayed alone or with the members of his family, as in the saint Anthony's chapel in the monastic church of saint Peter in Provaglio d'Iseo. Furthermore the present work aims to demonstrate the function of this kind of portrait in the liturgical space, with the intent to explain their role in relation with the choir and the lay area.

7. THE THEME OF DEATH IN THE LAUDARI OF THE WHITE DISCIPLINI IN THE ALPINE AREA

The central idea of the essay is to highlight a common feeling that unites the *laudari* (books of laudi) of the most ancient white *disciplini* (flagellants confraternity). From the meditation on death, the conviction that salvation is within everyone's reach is born because God's gift it is free and generous gift. Death in this perspective is nothing but the point of passage that will allow everyone to reap the fruits of what was sown. Then not a path of mortification and penance, but rather a gym of perfection in which the collective dimension is essential.

8. IMAGES OF DEATH IN VAL TROMPIA IN THE CENTURY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Historians who have studied the representation of death in the West oppose the archaic and the Christian model, stating that the traces of the first model

have survived up to on the threshold of the modern age, especially in popular contexts. In the case of Valtrompia, the study about the Christian model is carried out through a review of testamentary clauses concerning death obtained from a sample of wills collected in the eighteenth century by the notaries of the mining villages of the upper Valley. The research on the archaic model is developed through ethnographic sources, from which it is possible to deduct the Church's effort to repress or christianize some uses, largely centered on the belief in the periodic return of the dead among the living.

9. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE DEATH IN VAL BREMBANA CULTURE: FROM THE DANSE MACABRE TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY POST-MORTEM PHOTOGRAPHY

Post mortem photography or *memento mori*, the photographing of a deceased person, has become a common practice in American and European Victorian culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thanks to the spread of the daguerreotype, which allowed the abatement of costs, this practice spread widely, reaching also Valle Brembana, in the province of Bergamo, where some families began to contact the photographer Eugenio Goglio to get a last memory of a deceased relative. The subject is usually depicted so as to seem in a deep sleep, or else arranged to appear more lifelike; while in some other images corpses had a rosy tint added to the cheeks and opened eyes, with metal stands and other devices used to pose the dead as though they were living.

10. THE CUSTOMS OF DRAINING CORPSES AND SECOND BURIAL IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT STEPHEN IN MAZZO DI VALTELLINA

In Mazzo di Valtellina, in the crypt of saint Stephen church, there is a particular funeral structure which was reserved only for the canons. This building allowed to intervene in the decomposition process and it was functional for a prolonged treatment of the corpses. After the death corpses were placed in sitting position on particular seats (used to dry the bodies eliminating the bodily fluids) and remained there until the body was completely skeletonized. Afterwards corpses were subjected to a second burial, often accompanied by new funeral rites. The purpose of this research is to propose some considerations about the functional destination and on ritual motivations that pushed canons to be «buried» while seated.

11. THE DEAD IN THE CONTADO OF BORMIO

The article intends to present a collection of testimonies on the theme of death spread in the countryside (*contado*) of Bormio during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

12. THE THEME OF THE DEATH IN THE TALES AND SONGS OF THE MINERS IN SCHNEEBERG, BETWEEN VAL PASSIRIA AND VAL RIDANNA

The exploitation of Schneeberg mine, located between Val Passiria and Val Ridanna (Bolzano), had a very long historic, cultural and economic tradition. It started in the 13th century and lasted until 1985. In Schneeberg, at 2300 m.a.s.l., silver galena mining was mainly carried out by Tyrolean miners until the end of

19th century. Many important documents concerning the mining history and heritage are preserved in the Mine Museum in Schneeberg. In particular, there are two Books of Miners recalling the history of the mine from 1703 to 1985. In addition to some reports about the economic trend of the mine, these books include mining tales and songs written by the miners themselves. A recurring feature of these texts, mainly written in German, is the theme of the death which represents a key factor in miners ideology.

13. THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE HOLY CROSS IN AOSTA, BETWEEN GRACE AND CONSOLATIO

From the 15th century the Confraternities of Justice, leaded by the work of «consolation», achieved an important role with the aim to bring physical and spiritual support to the sentenced to death. The Confraternity of *Santa Croce* (The Confraternity of the Holy Cross) was established in 1598 with the role of leading both spiritually and physically the sentenced to death to the scaffold and comforting him to accept his punishment as the way to gain the access to the divine mercy. The Breviary used by the Confraternity represents an interesting example of «consolation literature», common among the modern Italy confraternities and part of Artes *bene moriendi* current, containing admonitions, advices and a series of useful information in order to give answers to the convicts queries. In the Aosta Diocesan Archive an important document dated back to 17th century and concerning the «*privilège de racheter de la peine de mort un condamné*» is preserved: it is a document establishing, once a year, the privilege for the Confraternity to obtain the grace for a sentenced to death.

14. THE SILENCE AS WITNESS OF THE PAST

The article illustrates the research project and video production concerning Valle d'Aosta cemeteries. In the second part some traditional customs related to the theme of death are described: from the transport of the dead persons, to the Walser habits, to the *repi*: the ephemeral return to life of children never born.

15. SYMBOLS AND CULT OF DEAD IN THE ROCK ART OF VALLE CAMONICA

Considering some types of symbols in the rock engravings of Valle Camonica, the essay aims to provide a possible interpretation of prehistoric rock art connected to the cult of the dead people. The hypothesis is inspired by the link between the Copper Age monumental complex and cult of ancestors, which remains in the following epochs appearing in the engraving rite aimed to keep alive the memory of the deceased.

16. THE ROMAN NECROPOLIS OF SAN DONATO DI LAMON (BELLUNO)

Archaeological excavations at San Donato di Lamon (in a mountainous part of Belluno province, not far from the western boundary with Trento) have confirmed the existence of a Roman cemetery (whose different aspects are under investigation by a group of researchers for a complete publication). Excavations directed from 2000 to 2009 by the archaeological Superintendency yielded about 90 graves, which date from between the mid first and fourth centuries AD or la-

ter. All the graves in the cemetery were simple burials, in small graves, little more than a meter long. Unusually most of the individuals (male and female, death aged 35-45 and quite physically strong) were laid in a crouched position, propped up with their backs against the wall of the grave and their legs bent or sometimes straight. The way in which the bodies were laid in the graves would seem to be unique to this site in Roman times. The dead were buried with objects that were clothing accessories, ornamental or for daily use, and often with a donation of one or more coins. The male burials had relatively few grave goods, whilst the female burials were generally richer, often with jewels. These objects show the circulation of craft products and the commercial contacts of the ancient community of San Donato. The peculiar aspects of the Roman cemetery of San Donato (where also a cow burial was found that is believed to have been a sacrifice) make it of particular historical and scientific interest among burial related issues as well as defining aspects of the community who lived in that mountainous area.

17. FUNUS LAEBACTIUM. THE SEPULCHRAL AREA OF CASTELLAVAZZO (BELLUNO)

The paper regards an original Roman age funerary context, unearthed in 1996-1997 in the hamlet of Castellavazzo, Longarone (Belluno). The burial plot, dated between the first and the second century AD, is distinguished by the presence of rituals with Venetian, Celtic, Rhaetian and Roman aspects, giving a good example of the various cultural climate typical of the Alpine valleys. Placed on an area on the Piave river, the site was established in Roman times as an outpost (*castellum/castrum*) to control the road from Feltre to Noricum, connecting the Po Valley with the Alps. The current name still keeps the memory of an indigenous population known on the basis of epigraphs (*Laebactes*). The burial plot was located outside the town, in connection with the road. Some cremation burials, also with a monumental complex above the ground and with value grave goods, suggest a cultured and wealthy society. Next to the graves, there was a large combustion area, interpreted as *ustrinum* for its proximity to the tomb structures and the presence of pottery and glass altered by fire. The context, however, is unusual, and the finds from the burning ground reveal a similarity with the material evidence of *Brandopferplätze* (burning votive areas) of Alpine tradition, perhaps related to ritual practices about the cult of the dead.

18. MILLSTONES AND GRAVES FROM PREHISTORY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: TWO EXAMPLES FROM THE PROVINCE OF TRENTO

In archaeology, it is quite common to find querns in settlements or manufacturing sites, in layers of production scraps or in re-employment contexts. More unusual, but well documented, is the discovery of grinding stones in funerary sites; this situation is testified from the Stone Age and it persists beyond the Roman period and there are also some examples in the Alpine region. In the former part this paper presents a synthetic list of instances, from Paleolithic to Early Middle Ages, where the association between querns and burials is attested; the aim is to highlight the multiple functions and meanings of the grinding stones in the funerary contexts. In fact, the quern could be reused as building material,

like any other stone; it could have a ritual and symbolic meaning when it became a grave good or offering for the dead; in some circumstances, it's possible that the quern was used properly for milling products for the funerary rituals. In the latter part the article focuses on two study cases from the Alpine region (Autonomous Province of Trento – Italy) concerning the upper stone of a saddle quern for dyes found in a burial place dating back to the Copper Age (Dos de la Forca-Mezzocorona) and a rotary quern for grain probably included in a Roman cemetery (Romallo).

19. THE HIGH MEDIEVAL CEMETERY AT THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARTIN INSIDE CASTEL DRENA (TRENTO): A COMBINED APPROACH BETWEEN PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHEOLOGY

Castel Drena is located in a strategic position along an ancient street connecting Lake Garda and Trento. The present study deals with the skeletal material of the first period of this complex (from the late VIII or early IX century until the middle of the XI century AD.) In the first period there was a quadrangular church (5.50 x 6.20 m.) with a single hall with apse facing east and a wall probable entrance to cemetery and burials area. Considering the archaeological data and the newly emerged anthropological data, it can be assumed that this sample is made up of a group of men physically strong and dedicated, at least in part, to the defense of the checkpoint where the church was. This is shown by the signs of trauma due to the fighting, by the strong muscular attachments, by the absence of traces of periods of metabolic stress during childhood and the absence of strong indicators of food shortages on adult males of this sample. The high infant mortality indicates instead difficult living conditions for the families of these men. This cemetery is in line with the changes that emerged from the early Middle Ages: the burials are undifferentiated and don't perpetuate social divisions after death. They rather contribute to the construction of a collective memory of the rural community of which they are the expression.