

The “Fake” Devotion within the Procession as an Affirmation of the Mafia Power

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Abstract: *The religious sense or rather of the religiosity of the individual is closely linked to the intimate, private sphere that a social actor does not manifest; religiosity is very strictly personal. The religion of the individual concerns the public sphere, that which manifests through gestures and devotional acts, pilgrimages, faith paths and processions. Mafia religiosity can be identified in three specific moments: the first takes place in the private sphere of the individual, in which the behaviour is closely linked to the faith of the individual but also to the transgression of the law by carrying out crimes that at their base are violent in both physical and psychological terms. The second concerns the public sphere of the individual, that is, the manifestation of one's religiosity by presiding over processions or being part of it. The third form is manifested through the gestures and the behaviour of deference directed not at the simulacrum but at the mafia subject or at those who have a close connection with the mafia organization or take their place. Two systems of values are distinguished: sacred and secular. Each of these two value systems corresponds to a type of company, also opposite. What is a procession? Who are the participants at the procession in to the streets? What is the “bowing” phenomenon during a procession? “Genuflect or Bowing?”.*

Keywords: territory, social space, sacred, ritual, religion, processions, devotion, bow

1. Introduction

The Mafia is a human phenomenon, and like all human phenomena, it had a beginning, an evolution, and sooner or later, it will come to an end. I only hope the death of the Mafia doesn't come along with the final end of mankind.

Giovanni Falcone¹

The connection that exists between religion and religiosity, similar terminologies but which inexorably differ, is expressed in the “private sphere” and in the “public sphere” inside or outside the human behaviour among humans.

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What is a procession? Who are the participants at the procession in to the streets? What is the “bowing” phenomenon during a procession?

In the first time the need to specify and selected the terminology inside my research – social case studies in to the Sicily land.

The religious procession, in most cases is carried out along the main streets of the city, it collects a community of individuals who give shape to a community of believers,

¹ Giovanni Falcone (18 May 1939 - 23 May 1992) was a Sicilian/Italian prosecuting magistrate born in Palermo, Sicily. From his office in the Palace of Justice in Palermo, he spent most of his professional life trying to overthrow the power of the Mafia in Sicily. After a long and distinguished career, culminating in the famous Maxi Trial, he was killed by the Mafia in May 1992, on the motorway near the town of Capaci.

implementing forms of legitimation and recognition of places. During these events, relationships are established that are closely connected with religion. For example, during some festivals the presence of votive shrines built in honour of the saint represent the “stop or stop” point of the procession itself. Usually the simulacrum starts again after the sound of “the bell” to the so-called “three strokes”.

For the first time on 21 June 2014, Pope Francis stated that the participants to the mafia aggregations “are all excommunicated”.

For Catholics, gestures made with the body constitute an acknowledgement of God's presence. We genuflect as a sign of adoration and belief in the Real Presence, that is, of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We bow as a form of reverence to signify our belief and to give respect for that which we are bowing to.

2. The terminology: Bowing and Genuflection

What is the “bowing”? Where we use this word? Why? The According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, a bow signifies reverence and honour shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them.

There are two kinds of bows: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.

A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honour Mass is being celebrated. A bow of the body, that is to say a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers.

What is a “genuflection”? Where we use this word? Why? A genuflection is made by bending the right knee to the ground. It signifies adoration and is reserved for the Most

Blessed Sacrament as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

During Mass, three genuflections are made by the priest celebrant: namely, after the showing of the host, after the showing of the chalice, and before Communion. Certain specific features to be observed in a concelebrated Mass are noted in their proper place.

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.

Otherwise all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Ministers carrying the processional cross or candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.

It is also customary for parishioners to genuflect before and after Mass when entering or exiting the pew, toward the tabernacle, acknowledging the presence of Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The central issue concerning genuflection or bowing is simply this — showing respect both to the altar symbolizing Christ, and to the reserved Sacrament in the tabernacle.

3. The “Bowling” in to a Catholic Procession: the Case Analyses of Sociologists

The Italian sociologist of religion Salvatore Abbruzzese identifies: the term “bow”. It is ... - as in the cases of “Ballarò” (one of the five quarters in Palermo) ...of an instrumental use of the rite in function of legitimation and self-absolution. This sort of “do-it-yourself blessing” is realized in a thousand possible ways: from the conquest of a visibility in the processions, to the publicly manifested devotional gesture, to the transport of the statue, up to the participation in the front line of the organizational structure. In this kind of legitimacy, powerful and aspiring ones have been grappling with commitment and attention for centuries. Quick and ready to be seen where they want to be seen and, above all, quick to position themselves in the attitude and behaviour with which they want to be framed. Such is not always easy to intercept, as it does not reside in the gesture itself, but only in the intentions with which it is performed”.

Addressing the case of "bows" during processions involves the use of a long series of concepts developed by ethnologists, anthropologists and revisited by sociologists. Defining what is meant by “territory”, “social space”, “sacred”, “ritual”, “religion”, “processions” and “devotion” is a methodologically indispensable operation. Faced with a phenomenon that collects multiple and deeply differentiated interests, it becomes necessary to start by collecting and listing the necessary concepts, in their complexity and in their internal articulation. Each of these is useful in analysing

the complex social phenomenon: where ritual and devotion, entertainment and socialization, association commitment and institutional presence, economic opportunity and political visibility tend to flow into the same container.

The term territory, which has acquired different meanings in the various disciplines, becomes in the social sciences that geographical space in which the historical collectivises have structured the individual and social times, established the historical temporariness and attributed a sense to the natural one. This allowed the emergence of specific forms through the regularity and repetitiveness of individual and collective rituals, the stability of daily practices; the rereading of the rhythms imposed by nature and the legitimacy of those set by the great social institutions; the preservation of memory and the innovation of imagination.

In the different eras and cultures, the values that are at the origin of representations and interpretations of the territory in which each discipline has designated the physical, economic, cultural and social landscape, are seen as the result of a cumulative selection process, of a long succession of conservation choices, modification and transformation of its parts.

The initial assumption the territory is the result of the conscious commitment of a community, in a certain historical stage, for the conservation, the enhancement of resources and the organization of activities connected and differentiated between them. In the processes of social reproduction, the territory understood as a socially inhabited space appears as an immense stratification of signs, which testify to the processes of symbolization, and of artefacts in which the work of the different generations is physically condensed. In each territory it is possible to grasp the persistence of an itinerary over time, being able, in fact, to trace the forms of organization of the main processes of social reproduction. Each territory is to a large extent the history of a cumulative selection process, where images, symbolic plots, rationality criteria, theories, selection criteria and choice that the latter have built up accumulate. In the various epochs the different societies, through the cumulative selection process, assigned different values to the different portions of territory: whether they were symbolic values or whether they were values that could be translated into money. A territory is always made up of specific and not easily reproducible positions, each endowed with its own value, the outcome of its natural characteristics and of the meaning they have assumed within a given culture, social and individual practices.

The strongly urbanized territories are “the field of study on the process of cumulative selection and construction of values, in them the processes of substitution, demolition and reconstruction, consolidation and modification of symbolic and material values are more frequent and can be documented in the new artefacts with respect to the existing ones”. The territory has built strong and persistent images that, over time, have expanded, opposed and overlapped. It represents the place, where in the hierarchy of space a value system is established that favours “verticality and interiority”.

The French sociologist Raymond Boudon identifies in the differentiation of the interaction systems (which concern the direct interaction within the social space), and in the systems of interdependence, in which the actions of each individual reflect a form of social process that contributed to the development of the city.

Social interaction is the process in which two or more people act by mutually orienting their actions. In the interaction the activities are coordinated, information is exchanged and influences expectations and behaviours. The interaction in situations of co-presence, also defined as direct or situated, connects the resources made available by those who indirectly interact with space. The presence of social interactions within the space involve different types of communications (direct and indirect) that derive from physical properties and constitute sine qua non conditions for the structuring of interaction itself.

The interaction in groups in a given social space corresponds, in the functionalist model, to rules introduced in the socialization process. The spatial configuration of an organization will influence its operation in many other ways, especially if it relies mainly on informal relationships - physical contiguity favours the formation of primary groups, while distance can promote group polarization. The distances between subjects considered appropriate in the different types of interaction vary from culture to culture. The displacement in space is often associated with the temporal one, in fact, the interactions take place in a particular place and have a specific time duration. Social activities are organized in time and space through the concept of regionalization which refers to the way in which social life is placed in space-time. The society appears to be regionalised in different local areas, areas dedicated to specific types of interaction up to the distinction of places for the moments of private life in which the subjects isolate themselves. The functional differentiation of activities, according to the different institutional contexts, implies a spatial differentiation, converging in the process of modernization of the territory. An anthropological place is a local area with specialized functions, it also incorporates symbolic elements.

Mafia religiosity is a phenomenon that is publicly manifested - despite the terminology of "religiosity" designating an expressive and inspired form of devotion, intimate of the individual. In this case, with the term "mafia" we mean the attitude that a community of social actors holds towards an individual - defined boss, boss or regent - against whom devotional behaviour defined as "respect" is implemented.

Mafia religiosity can be identified in three specific moments: the first takes place in the private sphere of the individual, in which the behaviour is closely linked to the faith of the individual but also to the transgression of the law by carrying out crimes that at their base are violent in both physical and psychological terms. The second concerns the public sphere of the individual, that is, the manifestation of one's religiosity by presiding over processions or being part of it. The third form is manifested through the gestures and the behaviour of

deference directed not at the simulacrum but at the mafia subject or at those who have a close connection with the mafia organization or take their place. Two systems of values are distinguished: sacred and secular. Each of these two value systems corresponds to a type of company, also opposite. The sacred differs because in the social system it is opposed to every form of change, while the secular accepts and promotes change. However, the absolutely evident fact remains of a context of explicit secularization which, objectively, poses the problem of the real consistency of the sacred. The functionalist current highlights the identity of the sacred and the function it performs, both in the processes of socialization and in those of personality formation in different historical and cultural contexts.

The emergence of a pluralistic and market society of religious goods denotes the crisis of religions, in which "goods and objects" of a profane nature circulate that have their foundation in the sacred. But also the commerce of the sacred requires in man a particular state of sanctity, greater strength, purity and chastity. Individuals with spiritual strength in their acts and operations manifest that something completely different "numinous" designated as sancta. The moments of aggregation are used by the actors as a functional tool for legitimizing and consolidating social ties. So, does mafia religiosity represent a harmless paradox or tool for legitimizing criminal power? The devotion of the confreres to an image is based on the value it holds as a testimony of a truth that tends to marry realism and symbolism. Unlike the depictions created to contain the relics, the icons ensure the presence of the prototype, therefore images and relics at the same time ensuring help and protection for the devotees.

The sacred is therefore one of the possible ways to give order and coherence to socially shared meanings: individuals and communities, in fact, who no longer find themselves sharing common values, to give meaning to their existence, give objects and symbols an absolute value, consecrating and separating them. The procession used differently from the goals set by the ecclesiastical community and for which it was structured over the centuries, thus becomes a place, where to show off the mafia power of a family that expresses itself through economic capacity, in the maintenance of all the other families of the affiliates but above all through the ostentation of reverential respect during religious events.

The religious feast is a moment in which protection is invoked to expel any kind of evil that hangs over society and not a moment of legitimization of criminal power. The passage of the procession is important to expel every form of evil it takes through modernization and progress - in consumerist and materialistic values. Traditional values are thus called into question, family, marriage, human dignity; and these must be protected through sacred intercession through its passage through the territory.

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