

*Il Santo Anello. Leggenda, storia, arte, devozione.* Perugia: Comune di Perugia, [2005]. 142 pp. b/w and colour illustrations. [Contains: Andrea Cernicchi "Presentazione" p. 7; Mons. Giuseppe Chiaretti "Premessa", p. 9; Amleto Spicciani "La leggenda del 'Santo Anello' di Chiusi" pp. 13–21; Enrico Barni "Il 'Santo Anello' e la storia dei rapporti nei secoli tra le comunità di Perugia e Chiusi" pp. 25–36; Marina Regni "Prime vicende del 'Santo Anello' a Perugia attraverso le carte d'archivio" pp. 37–50; Maria Duranti "Il culto del 'Santo Anello' tra i secoli XVI–XIX" pp. 51–62; Raffaele Caracciolo "Il 'Santo Anello' nell'arte: tra propaganda e culto della Sacra Famiglia" pp. 65–82; Giovanna Casagrande "La compagnia di San Giuseppe come specchio della città (1487–1627)" pp. 85–99; Maria Lucia Buseghin "Uno sguardo antropologico sul 'Santo Anello': osservazioni e riflessioni sugli aspetti devozionali e taumaturgici" pp. 100–115; Fausto Sciurpa "Il 'Santo Anello', tra realtà e simbolo" pp. 116–122; Anna Sulai Capponi "La via Francigena e il 'Santo Anello'" pp. 125–127; Miska Michele Tosti "Analisi gemmologica del 'Santo Anello'" pp. 128–133.]

The book, published by the Commune of Perugia, reconstructs the history and the legend of the Santo Anello (The Holy Ring), a relic conserved in Perugia's cathedral since 1473 after it was taken from the church of San Francesco in Chiusi. The relic is worshipped as the Virgin's wedding ring. The book contains essays divided in four thematic sections followed by an Appendix: "Leggenda" (Legend), "Storia" (History), "Arte" (Art), "Devozione" (Devotion).

In "La leggenda del 'Santo Anello' di Chiusi" Amleto Spicciani gives cues to interpret the relic's legend. The wedding ring of the Virgin was firstly owned by the town of Chiusi and linked to saint Mustiola's life, who according to one version of the story, brought the ring to Chiusi. The main source quoted by the author, *Ystoria Sacri Anuli*, is in Perugia's State Archive and it is part of a fourteenth-century codex. Duccio di Gano wrote a vernacular translation of the *Ystoria* and later, in the fifteenth century, the legend became the 42th (or 45th) miracle of the Holy Virgin in the "Libro del Cavaliere," a wide diffused legendary. Spicciani includes the story of the Virgin's wedding ring in the medieval tradition of the so-called relics' *inventiones* (findings), such as the finding of the Cross. According to various documents and codices, Spicciani narrates how, after having been owned by a Jewish jeweller, the relic arrived in Chiusi. As in the Holy Family's relics tradition, the ring was identified as the Virgin's by its miracles. Different versions of the legend are quoted by Spicciani briefly but precisely.

In his "Il 'Santo Anello' e la storia dei rapporti nei secoli tra le comunità di Perugia e Chiusi" Enrico Barni describes historical relations between Chiusi and Perugia and how the possession of the Virgin's ring coloured Chiusi's history up to the fifteenth century. At first the relic was preserved in Chiusi's basilica of Saint Mustiola, but around 1251 to guard against theft the ring was transferred to the Cathedral of San Secondiano, still within the town's walls. After struggling with Perugia, Chiusi's decadence began, and pilgrimages became one of its few

economic resources. In 1420 the ring was transferred again to yet another church, San Francesco. In the last paragraphs of his study Barni describes how at the end of July 1473 the ring was stolen by a German friar, Vinterio. Clashes between Chiusi and Perugia caused by the 'war of the Holy Ring' continued for several years. In 1488 Bernardino da Feltre established in Perugia the company of St. Joseph to guard the Holy Ring. The main source quoted by the author is the "Libro di memorie" of the Archivio Comunale di Chiusi.

In "Prime vicende del 'Santo Anello' a Perugia attraverso le carte d'Archivio" Marina Regni enriches the information supplied by Spicciani and Barni. The article provides documents from the archives in Perugia and Chiusi that help reconstruct the trial to friar Vinterio. Marni underlines the oddity of this criminal action. In fact the friar confessed, but Perugia did not return the Holy Ring to Chiusi. Vinterio spent his life serenely in Perugia, was buried near to the Holy Ring chapel and was honoured with a tomb. Other interesting sources concern the first exhibition of the ring in November 1473, a few months after its theft. The author concludes her article describing how celebrations evolved from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. Friar Vinterio's plea is transcribed in the appendix.

Maria Duranti's article reviews the devotional process linked to the Holy Ring between fifteenth and fifteenth century. The author describes how Perugia, legitimated by the pope in possessing the ring, built a spectacular frame around the Virgin's relic. Over the years, Umbria's capital established an expositions calendar in order to attract pilgrims. Three dates were set: 19 March, St. Joseph's feast, patron of Compagnia di San Giuseppe; 2-3 August, set strategically after the renowned Assisi's Perdono feast. During these days the town was crowded by devotees so that civic authorities supervised a strict and efficient organization. The author points out the rebirth of devotion after the Council of Trent giving examples of Perugia's residents devotion linked to the Holy Ring.

Raffaele Caracciolo analyses relations between the Holy Ring and the arts. Artistic commissions started in Perugia just after the theft. Proud to be the new owners of the relic, Perugia clergy and lay companies started important artistic commissions. In 1475, two years after the theft, the Confraternita di Sant'Andrea or della Giustizia, dedicated to comforting prisoners sentenced to death, commissioned the "Trittico della confraternita della Giustizia" (Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria) from Bartolomeo Caporali and Sante di Apollonio del Celandro. The triptych represents the Virgin with the Child and saints, including St. Andrew near to St. Mustiola, the woman who brought the ring to Chiusi. In 1488 St. Bernardino da Feltre received permission to build a chapel dedicated to St. Joseph in the cathedral where the Holy Ring was placed. For the new chapel the Compagnia di San Giuseppe commissioned the "Sposalizio della Vergine" (Marriage of the Virgin). At first Pinturicchio signed the contract, but since he was continually engaged the "Sposalizio" was re-assigned to Perugino who

completed the painting in 1504. The source of Perugino's iconology was the apocryphal Proto-gospel of James and Varagine's *Golden Legend*. During Napoleon's plunder of Italian masterpieces, Perugino's "Sposalizio" was taken to France and is now in Caen at the Musée des Beaux Arts.

In her "La compagnia di San Giuseppe come specchio della città (1487–1627)" Giovanna Casagrande analyses the Compagnia di San Giuseppe (Confraternity of St. Joseph) founded by Bernardino da Feltre in 1487. Casagrande quotes a large number of rare documents offering useful statistics that give an overview of confraternity's members and family names. Different social classes joined the confraternity in order to provide works of mercy. A major result of Casagrande's research concerns the reviewing of *matricole*, record books containing members' names. The *matricole* were divided by gender (some for men, some for women). These record books show a gallery of the noble and mercantile Perugia families, so that Casagrande is able to provide a detailed prosopography of confraternity members. The description of the sodality's social composition is the most important achievement of Casagrande's research and one of the most valuable contributions this book.

Maria Lucia Buseghin's contribution contextualizes the legend of the relic in wedding rituals and in the tradition of miracles and recoveries. Fausto Sciarpa inserts the legend of the Holy Ring into a wider consideration about faith and rationality from the past to the present. More interesting than the anthropological and faith backgrounds are some votive tablets which depict, with naive effectiveness, popular beliefs. The last contribution is by Anna Sulai Capponi. She briefly tries to map out the pilgrims' road related to the via Francigena. A report drawn up by a gemmologist, attesting that the ring is made of chalcedony, closes the book.

Although commissioned by the lay government of Perugia this volume merges a rationalist approach with a religious one. Documents, sources, and illustrations are undoubtedly the most important content of this work. Since two or three essays share the same topics, sometimes the reading becomes somewhat repetitive, and this should perhaps have been corrected by the volume's editors. That said, however, the volume is worth our attention for the information it provides on the Perugian confraternity of St Joseph and its participation in the most important local religious cult.

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