

Introduction

Ripacandida, Southern Italy

Many roads lead to Ripacandida.¹ One of the numerous routes to the small town in central southern Italy, somewhere between Bari and Naples, runs through the highest heavens – and at the same time through the orbits of the satellites, through the tangle of global electric cables, through the Internet, through our heads. Through the avenues of electronic services I fall like a sylph into the landscape of my research: Europe, Italy, southern Italy, the mountainous region between Bari and Naples, Potenza, Basilicata and Lucania, Monte Vulture, the Melfese with its old imperial city of Melfi, south of that Rionero in Vulture, Venosa, and in between, finally, Ripacandida.

I learnt a lot there, not by typing those names into a search machine, but by living there, on the ground, for a long time. Today, I can also observe this landscape from the highest heights, like a pilot, like a hang-glider or a flying shaman, until finally Ripacandida only looks like a kind of mould to me, on a surface of the bright colour of lime and dark green. But my knowledge is based, on the ground.



Figure 4. A view of Northern Lucania taken while paragliding, published in the Internet by a local enthusiast of paragliding, Attilio Addimandi from Melfi. The inscription in the upper right-hand corner reads ‘Exceptional flight, click here’, by courtesy of Attilio Addimandi.

Ripacandida: a hollow joins two cliffs. The historical village with its church and fort, and little white houses and narrow streets sprawls from the high protruding rock in the west. At the other end of the axis, in the east, you can just about make out a religious sanctuary, sports fields, a new estate, a cemetery. At length my gaze follows, past the only pizzeria in a town of 1,700 inhabitants, the rapid ascent in the direction of the millennia-old Via Appia. The course of old geological formations and ancient streets meets the aerospatial infrastructure of the third millennium. But, if you really want to recognize something here, get your bearings, when you move around here, then you again need to trust in the curves and loops of the ancient streets.

The street to the east, which leads past the pizzeria, takes you in the direction of Venosa, to the birthplace of the Roman poet Horace. The landscape is hilly, and you can get dizzy looking at the aerial photos, which offer no straight horizon this side of the photo edges. The north of Basilicata is, like most of the landscape in the south, crumpled, scarred by countless movements of the earth and volcanic activity, karst. West of the egg-shaped cliff of Ripacandida, Monte Vulture rises, a thickly forested volcanic mountain with multiple peaks. From this perspective the old imperial city of Melfi in the north looks like a toy town next to its disproportionately large medieval fort. At the foot of Monte Vulture you can make out an industrial area, which produces and distributes goods for agriculture, house construction and car repairs: Rionero – ‘black river’. Seemingly, the inhabitants knew very early on about the origin of their landscape, which was formed approximately 80,000 years ago during the last great volcanic eruption. In nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, this was one of the poorest areas, a place where emergency aid was constantly needed.² Today, Northern Lucania, measured against some rural areas in Poland and Slovenia, ranges a little bit higher among the



Figure 5. The Ripacandida depression, aerial photography published by the provincial council for tourism (APT) of Basilicata/Lucania on the Internet, <http://www.aptbasilicata.it> (20 March 2009).

European agricultural regions. However, the Mediterranean world, that moving wound between three continents that is constantly ripped open again, continuously adds to southern Italy's landscape, and the destructive effect is almost equal to the desertification that the Germans, the Russians, the communists and today's transitional situation in Poland and Slovenia have caused. At Ripacandida, in the last millennium on average every thirty years the population had to suffer a devastating earthquake, ranging above 6.0 on the Richter scale.³ The community council of Ripacandida displays, seemingly



In the course of the centuries, Ripacandida underwent many deleterious earthquakes, the most important of which are listed here:

Earthquakes at Ripacandida

YEAR	DAY	MONTH	HOUR	RICHTER-SCALE	LOSSES
1694	8	September	11,40	VIII	40 Houses destroyed
1851	14	August	13,20	VIII	60 persons killed
1851	14	August	14,40	VIII	
1853	4	April	12,45	IV	
1857	16	December	21,15	VI	
1910	7	June	2,04	VII	
1930	23	July	0,08	VIII	
1980	23	November	18,34	VI	

Figure 6. A list of local earthquakes at Ripacandida as it was published by the village council on its website, <http://www.comune.ripacandida.pz.it/>, translation by the author.

proudly, a list of seven earthquakes of that type, the first in AD 1694, the last in 1980, on its website <http://www.comune.ripacandida.pz.it>.

On the Internet, the local township of Ripacandida advertises itself with the headings 'Hotels' and 'Agritourism', although there is none of that there yet – this is how the schematized websites that the Italian state provides set development goals for its communes. The commune website offers extensive material on the almost 700-year-old frescos in the Pilgrimage Church of Saint Donatus. Strangely, the numerous earthquakes of the past centuries have not managed to damage them much. The iconography of the Pilgrimage Church of Saint Donatus refers to the early history of the Franciscan order. Today, Franciscan nuns still run the sanctuary and affiliated kindergarten and this religious order, having been founded in Tuscany in central Italy, has a long history in this tiny place in southern Italy. Somewhere between Assisi and the Sanctuary of La Verna near Arezzo, in central Italy, far away from the south, is where the Franciscan frescos and their order are ultimately at home, where Dante's journey to the underworld also began. The Casentino valley north of Arezzo is the home of many stories of miracles involving Saint Francis. Florentine Renaissance rulers and philosophers used the Casentino as a natural and spiritual reserve, supporting the learned Camaldoli order against the Franciscans of La Verna. The Donatus cult, which spread all over Italy from around AD 900, also started here, just north of the popes' region of influence in the Early Middle Ages. Dante Alighieri called the inhabitants of Arezzo snarling dogs,⁴ because they fought in vain against Florentine dominance and formed some kind of buffer state between the papal lands and Florence. On the southern border of papal lands, in the ancient border triangle between papal Benevento, Norman Campania and the first Byzantine, then Norman, then Swabian Basilicata, for a long time it was also usual to conquer land by marking the territory with monasteries and with pilgrimage sanctuaries of mystical saints.⁵ Donatus, the central Italian saint from the northern edge of the papal states, came to southern Italian Lucania, long since removed from papal power, where his cult is still evident in many ways today. Yet in Ripacandida his name and cult would be preserved more grandly and to a greater extent than in other places right into the twenty-first century. Last but not least, the cult around San Donato even lured an anthropologist, who can now again be found represented with his research in some German travel guides for southern Italy when they talk about Lucania and Ripacandida. Forms of prominence make reference to each other, they react on local profiles and, in turn, give the landscape and its social structure a profile in the globalized public – it is with forms such as these of literal emergence (prominence, structure, profile), of designation and reference, that the system of spiritual emulation and patronage is also sewn together. One of the oldest and still active forms of that process on earth is Catholicism, which is what we are talking about here.

Body, Legend, Rite

When I approach Ripacandida in the conventional way, in August, drawn by the festival of Saint Donatus, driving from the north in the car on the barely used Naples–Bari highway, then I cross a harvested moon landscape, full of road construction projects that have been started and then abandoned. Like an ant, my car

makes its way past huge concrete skeletons and flyovers falling into disrepair, which bear the telltale signs of the earthquake. Sometimes, there is not even enough money to clear away the rubble and new buildings are simply built directly next to the ruins; in short, the rural area architectonically reveals some resemblances to worn-out industrial areas in the USA or Germany. Somewhere around there, near the FIAT factories at San Nicola, I turn onto the *superstrada* towards the south and then, near Rionero and Barile, I drive on the winding roads into the landscape marked by vineyards and cliffs towards Ripacandida. The *superstrada* on concrete stilts towards the east was still not finished in August 2008. One day, it is meant to bridge the small valleys that separate Ripacandida from Venosa and Rionero. Once again, the place lies before me like a Neapolitan nativity set, rising up from the cliffs. Today, from close up, Ripacandida seems aged and somewhat deserted. The population pyramid has been turned upside down, there are few children and many elderly. Twenty-five years ago, when I started my research, it was different.

Yet one thing that has remained the same is that I still immediately meet people I know as soon as I turn into Ripacandida in my car, and in the end I am forced to park the car and walk the rest of the way into the town centre on the egg-shaped cliff, high above the Pilgrimage Church, the cemetery and the new estates and now my forward movement follows a different logic. Friends direct me to other friends and sometimes I have to take secret passages if I want to get from one part of the town to another in a very short space of time.

The community has thinned out, but in recompense the remaining group of 1,700 residents of 2008, which has shrunk from around 4,000 in the 1960s, keeps to tradition – in a modernized way. They continue to honour their saint in large festivals and in 2007 there has even been talk in the town hall about wanting to found an association of all Catholic communities that had anything to do with a patron saint named Donatus in their histories. There are still local structures here and migrants in Rome, Chicago and Brussels still believe that they make sense. Maybe the *Ripacandidesi* were taken in by the idea of a nativity set of tradition, their own village, their *paese* (homeland, community), which rises up in a landscape that is slowly modernizing, and still marked by agriculture, drought and earthquakes. In any case, I was taken in by it and this is why, in the autumn of 1982, having come from Berlin, I made Ripacandida my field of research. Since then, the festival in the sanctuary in the rocky depression, under the egg-shaped cliff carrying this nativity set of a village, has matured into one of the largest pilgrimages in northern Lucania and it is certainly not my research that is to thank for this, which, despite all my efforts, has to this day not been translated into and published in Italian.

Under the watchful eye of the saint, the people from Ripacandida talk about their contacts – even down to those of their brothers, sisters or children who have emigrated, for example, to Blue Island, Illinois, not far away from Chicago.⁶ The statue of San Donato there, which is today honoured by Poles, Mexicans and a few remaining southern Italians, shows strong, angular facial features,⁷ as you see more often on white people in North America; however, the weak, white-faced saint of the town of origin still shows what he is and what he nonetheless controls: he is an illness. San Donato was and is above all epilepsy⁸ or other convulsions: ‘He suffered with it for 25 years, then he was cured and he died’.⁹

And, in this way, the provincial story of the cult of saints and of magic in Ripacandida also becomes important for the 'world'. In principle, this 'world', equipped with computers, satellite systems and long-distance missiles, is perfectly indifferent to what goes on down there on a peninsula in the Mediterranean, in a line between the mountains, in a depression between two hills. For a long time no tourists at all came to the town, which lies far away from the coast, and today there are a few arty Italians at most who want to see the frescos in the Church of Saint Donatus. However, if science and the



Figure 7. The statue of Saint Donatus at Ripacandida before restoration in 2009, taken from a postcard sold in the sanctuary, author's collection.

enlightened world public, rather than the centres of power controlling the ‘world’, want to better understand why we cannot think our way out of religion,

plan a life without it, economize and consume it out of modern life, then they must start in little niches like this one. Places like Ripacandida supply the world with emigrants – among them one of Europe’s most influential surgeons of the early nineteenth century and an American winner of a Nobel Prize¹⁰ – and they remain behind as withdrawn areas of the agricultural economy and traditional ways of thinking and as reserves of future action. The religious and political options of reserves like these can halt the progress of modernization, they can turn it into its opposite, reverse it and maybe even destroy it – and/or lead to an indigenous variant of modernization. One form of the modernization of religion is the young men from Ripacandida armed with their mobile phones, engineers, the unemployed and teachers who carefully haul an antique statue of a saint past tens of thousands of people in the heat of summer every year together with a few miracle-making sponsors. Another, similar form of modernization is evident today in the young men who declare, abusing the name of Allah, war on the West from their hideouts in provincial towns in the eastern Mediterranean or the Middle East, from barren landscapes or from migrant districts in large cities.

I did not know much about the world when I started my research on the intricacies of religion in southern Italy more than twenty-five years ago, but I had an idea that this stage of transformation of miniature worlds into the one large world would not progress as unproblematically as European and American intellectuals liked to imagine back then. I knew that the Earth is not flat, it only looks like it from very high up and the closer you get to it, the more jagged the landscape is. And not only the landscape is jagged, but also the social structures of the people, their relationships between themselves and to the imaginary world, their relationships to themselves are also jagged, and, in the course of the years, so are their faces, as are only the faces of people who are forced to live a miserable existence in the nooks and crannies of the big cities. You really need to look closely to better understand why, despite this, some people from the Mediterranean, the Middle East and other areas of the world that have become peripheral do not seek eternal youth in the cities, plastered with billboards, but prefer surviving in a jagged nook or would even most like to destroy the cities from that very nook.

Around the turn of the millennium before last, the cult of the patron saint of convulsions, Donatus, Bishop of Arezzo, who according to legend was beheaded during the persecution of Christians under the reactionary pagan Emperor Julian the Apostate in 362, was propagated throughout the whole of Italy – too many children must have died at that time from what we know of today as ‘cot death’ or similar.¹¹ Early miracle books report the saint’s beneficial effect on the nerves, who, in this, completely resembled his counterpart north of the Alps, Saint Valentine. The Donatus of Ripacandida is one of many Donatuses; in Basilicata, he was not just honoured with major festivals in Ripacandida, but also in Anzi in southern Lucania. There is a similar small town that celebrates San Donato on a large scale in neighbouring Puglia, at the centre of the spread of the cult of the Tarantella. In Anzi, Ruoti and many other towns, you can still find the statues characteristic of the cult of the saint until the nineteenth century: a distraught mother holds up a convulsing child to the saint, who looks ahead with indifference in his bishop’s regalia, or an old, bearded bishop greets his visitors – in a threatening or a friendly way, depending on how you see it – with his staff.¹²

The Donatus of Ripacandida, anaemic and epileptic, only looks down onto his followers in silence and instead, of the convulsing child, he has a little Franciscan monk with childlike features by his side, greeting visitors like a good boy. He spends most of the year above the altar in the Pilgrimage Church outside the town, down in the depression between the two hills. His sanctuary stands a few metres above the site of the oldest archaeological finds in the subarea, namely the 700–800-year-old graves of Bronze Age warriors.¹³ The park behind the Church of Saint Donatus, right above the archaeological site, as we have only really come to understand in the last few years, is scattered with a few approximately 600-year-old Aleppo pines, whose seeds were perhaps brought back by crusaders from the Holy Land – this must have been a special place for a very long time, the sacred grove of a church in which miracles are performed. The township of Ripacandida today maintains an employee exclusively responsible for the care of that extended garden. This was a *sanctuarium*, a place of protection, and it still is today.¹⁴ It is here that the pilgrims assemble around their saint, at the end of the big procession of 5 August, when he is going to greet them and then to leave them for months and months, ‘hiding’ in the old pilgrimage church. But, since the early 1990s, this place and the adjacent gardens have been the venue for an event in the summer months called the ‘Lovers’ Rebellion’, a sometimes quiet and sometimes loud fight by the young people for their right to hold hands and kiss.

And many people from Ripacandida told me how they gathered on the sanctuary’s forecourt, after a ravaged and chaotic night, on 24 November, 1980. This was after the biggest earthquake of that period in Italy, in the evening of 23 November, when multiple powerful tremors made large areas of buildings around Irpinia and in northern Lucania uninhabitable and the earth shook with aftershocks the whole night long. Several thousand people lost their lives. The survivors of Ripacandida prayed and told how the saint had come to them in a dream before the earthquake, his head under his arm, for he was martyred, as the legend goes, by being beheaded: ‘I did not want it’, he says, holding his head in his hands, being damaged himself. In their own community, although many houses had been made uninhabitable, as far as I was told, ‘only an old lady had suffered, and just her shoulder, not her head’. The geophysical facts behind these narratives are of a simple nature – depressions, arches of rock between two raised areas ride the tremors a little and are therefore protected somewhat more from the deep tremors than other parts of the landscape. Natural ‘bridges’ between two rocks suffer reduced seismic activity, and this, I suppose, is the reason why the place in front of the sanctuary of Saint Donatus in Ripacandida is also the sanctuary for those who experienced an earthquake.¹⁵

This old saint has a competitor, and he is likewise called Donatus. His story is not about a single appearance and an individual person, as much older *Ripacandidesi* still believe, but a fruit of religious propaganda, role models and humanized values that work with repetition, with passepartouts and with imitation. In the twelfth century, a boy was born in Ripacandida, and he was named after the town’s spiritual protector, Saint Donatus. Donato Simone already in his very young years started a life of monkish devotion. This other Donatus was later beatified and sanctified, and he is still venerated in some places today, for example, as a communal patron of the small town of Auletta, situated on the border between Lucania and Campania. Generations of priests from Ripacandida thought it a good idea to put the monastic brother-in-

effort, a saint of hard-working humility,¹⁶ in the place of the old Donatus once imported from Arezzo. The priests and bishops must have started to consider the old Donatus strange early on, with his cult of convulsions and the public pressure insisting on forming dark legends and ‘pagan’ rituals, such as ‘weighing’ children against a sacrificial sack of corn using a gigantic set of scales at the entrance to the church, creeping and crawling in front of the altar, dressing children up as bishops and especially the hysteric epileptic fits of both children and adults who had committed



Figure 8. The feast of Saint Donatus in the 1980s: Attaching banknotes to the statue of the saint, photograph from the author’s collection.

themselves to the saint so that he would take the illness away from them.¹⁷ They did not accept San Donatello in Ripacandida because he was not a foreigner, because he had no secret to offer in the place of his birth. In Auletta, so they say, after his death, Donatello is said to have dropped an arm at a sanctuary in Campania while being taken back to Ripacandida, as a sign that he wanted to stay there. This was deep and dark enough for the inhabitants of Auletta; this is why they made him their patron saint. The priests of Ripacandida never succeeded in establishing San Donatello, the little Donatus, as the inhabitants of Ripacandida call him, almost derogatorily, as patron saint of his birthplace. Pale and shy, he still makes his way today in the procession at the opening of the holy season, far behind San Donato, the bishop, the healer of epilepsy who is himself epileptic.

The Procession of San Donato, like every procession in the Catholic world, is an illustration of the social order conceived and propagated by the Church, structured in layers of more or less significance. With San Donato, the sick and the *devoti* who have been miraculously cured have priority, they bid among themselves, offering large sums for the right to help carry the saint on his bier, sometimes they carry the saint themselves, sometimes they pass the task on to young men who do it in their name. Names, bodies and images stand next to each other and for each other. This creates a certain autopoietic quality of the cult, it claims independence from other powers – as late as the 1980s, the Bishop of Venosa, while arguing for priority in the order of the procession, was slapped in the face by an old farmer's wife.

Scandal

Even today, an above average number of children in Ripacandida are still named Donato, because this offers the promise that the saint with supernatural powers will protect the health of these children bearing his name from strokes of fate, but above all from that divine punishment which makes you writhe on the floor. The most sinister idea that those I spoke to mentioned to me every now and then in this context was that the martyred bishop stood, invisible, over the writhing epileptics, that it was he himself who hit them, he is the illness. He does not put on an act, this bodiless human, he is at once sickness and cure. The holy sickness, in this case, is extremely closely related to moral codes of family life. The mothers of children who suffer fits, who writhe and stutter, who cannot think or look at things properly, they are (this was the secret of this local religion) the ones who bring the saint's punishment upon them, which only the saint can take back. One small flirtation, one lapse means that their child cannot walk. Even in the 1980s and 1990s, during the official blessing of the children at the Festival of Saint Donatus mothers were still placing their children on the altar with a jolt, 'so that he notices the child, so that he can take him up in his arms, if he wants to, he must take the child unto himself and let him die or let him live and be healthy'. Donato is able to perform mercy killings on sick children. Donatello has become a litmus test for Donato. You can see where the borders lie in terms of the politicization of cults from the tenacity with which the mothers of northern Lucania adhered to the martyr bishop and rejected the cult of the young brother-in-effort. The inhabitants of Ripacandida wanted and want a great, old-fash-

ioned saint who reigns over them demoniacally, they do not want a fellow citizen as their patron saint. Religion is always ‘skandalon’¹⁸, scandal, the ‘stumbling block’, that causes the overt believers to fall. This Christian concept stands beyond what can be grasped and reasonably explained by theories on ritual as spectator-oriented performance and religion as a form of politicization.¹⁹ Women drive this local cult of falling sickness and stumbling blocks forward, which is then turned into a public event and a political force by male priests and politicians. It is here, then, that banality takes its toll, as it was already aptly described by Carlo Levi in the dry remarks dedicated to the local *fiesta* at Aliano in his *Christ Stopped at Eboli*:

on a throne supported by two long shafts, which a dozen men at a time took turns in carrying, came the Madonna. She was a paltry papier mache affair, a copy of the powerful and famous Madonna of Viggiano, with the same Mack face, and decked out with sumptuous robes, necklaces, and bracelets. Just behind them walked Don Trajelia with a white surplice over his greasy cassock and his usual weary and bored expression; then the mayor and the sergeant, the gentry, and, bringing up the rear, the women with their fluttering veils, the children, and the peasants ... as soon as it was dark the entire village turned out along the edge of the ravine. This was the occasion on which I saw groups of young fellows climb up on the roof of the monumental public toilet in order to get a better view. In honor of the Madonna even we political prisoners were allowed to stay out an hour later than usual ... At last twenty giant firecrackers went off in quick succession and there was a final crash ending. I heard footsteps on the street and doors opening and shutting as the crowd scattered. The peasant holiday was over, with its fiery and frenzied excitement. The animals slept, and silence and the empty blackness of the sky hung once more over the darkened village.²⁰

Without the mystery of life – for Christians and for non-Christians too, this always includes something unfathomable, something sinful, a scandal – a cult is insignificant. Without this sinfulness there is no birth, birth makes a baptism necessary, for example with holy water, to purify – a cultural act takes the place of raw nature. This is why the motif of baptism threads its way through the popular cults and private forms of magic described in this book, linking them all together. In Ripacandida today, the conglomerate of cognitions and practices we can call ‘San Donato’, still watches over all of this, even though, as I had still been able to observe now and again in the 1980s, the women no longer do penance in the form of licking the stone floor in front of his altar, walking barefoot in the procession, or making terrible confessions before the saint and then presenting him with their sick child with a hefty push – all this ‘fiery and frenzied excitement’. Today the cult is civilized and they have beautifully restored statues of the moon-faced epileptic. Yet festival committees and priests continue to have to argue over the income from donations every year, whether the money may be directly pinned onto the bishop during the procession and thus belongs to the saint (i.e. the civic feast committee), or whether it must be given directly to the priests (i.e. to the Church). I can prove that these quarrels have been developing over at least 100 years in ever new local political constellations.²¹ Only a short time ago, around 2005 and 2006, there was trouble again involving the chairman of the festival committee. He had organized appearances by famous Italian pop stars at the saint’s festivals using donation money from the committee – only it was in order to take in ever more money for the committee. For example, the very famous Italian pop and folk music singer Francesco de Gregori gave a performance on 7 August, 2006 on Ripacandida’s

sports field, as part of a tour that took him from Ostia to Taormina. A small but very successful company in the entertainment industry had grown out of the cult of the saint. People casually said that the organizer had made money and one day he was kicked out of office, how and by whom I was unable to find out. I myself had the opportunity in 2004 to talk to him and the only thing I was able to establish was that the most important thing to him was maintaining his reputation as a friend of the saint. He says the saint healed his daughter, that was the most important thing. In 2008, he had lost his important role in communal life and accompanied, in the role of an average pilgrim, a procession that was more than ever marked by the priests and their ideas about decorum. Priests, delegates, magi and all possible laypeople argue over the economic aspects. But parents, and especially women and children, made the cult big. The aura of the authentic, the mysteries of life and death, the women and children, private life and the double-bind relation of devotion and rebellion surrounds every patrilinear society, and it finds an apex in the aura of the Catholic saints and in the authoritarianism of the Roman Church.

Scandal and ambivalence mark not only the 'irony of the state',²² but also the double existence of the Church. Baptism purifies and abstracts the naked facts of life. No birth without ambivalence and sin, without dirt and blood, no baptism without birth, no Catholics without baptism, no Catholicism without Catholics, no global society as it exists today without Catholicism. In practice, it does not make much difference, then, whether you speak of sins or, let us say, of trauma, as an enlightened audience from a big city in the West would often prefer today. It took me a long time to understand this – baptism makes you Catholic, not special dogmas that we believe or do not believe. From the sacrament of baptism, Catholicism's practices and discourses are drawn into a variety of official and unofficial liturgical practices, into popular religion and even deep into magic, with its secret whispers, its blessings and baptizing gestures and rubbings. Baptism always also forms gender relations, because women cannot baptize – this is why you meet female figures ever more frequently when you move from the centre to the edges of this religion, where imitations of baptismal rites play their role, up to the great heresies of early modern and modern baptism – not incidentally they often involve a re-evaluation of the role of women in Christian parishes. As a rule, 'unprogressive' Catholics do not consider the gender difference as a result but rather as a cause of social processes. This reversal of causality, which is again interesting for us today at a time of crisis in the social and political significance of religion in all its complex of problems, also informs the usual ideas that Catholics have regarding the relationship between nature and culture. Here, culture serves the purpose of giving nature a helping hand and enabling it to maintain its course, which is seen as normal, the 'natural' (God-given) course – this also explains, for example, many traditional Catholics' and the Church hierarchy's relationship to abortion, the death penalty, biotechnology. If we add the topic euthanasia too, it will perhaps become clear that an unprogressive attitude can change into a very current form of resistance against possibly dangerous outgrowths of enlightenment at any time. It is entirely possible that postmodern culturologists, modernist 'go-getters' and 'unprogressive' Catholics could once agree in a joint effort to steer the seemingly natural, but in fact highly 'derivative' and eccentric, course of capitalist economic development onto a course corresponding to human proportions that integrates raw

natural forces with the reserves and reflexivities of culture. I would estimate that 70 per cent of all *Ripacandidesi* still live in houses owned by their inhabitants, and around 50 per cent might own some pieces of ground that are used for agriculture or could be redestinated for that use. Manual labour, a subsistence economy and the silent reserves of small-scale agriculture allowed for the development and maintenance of drastic rites, independent health workers using uncommon methods and religious creativity at the level of families, networks and small political factions. They still exist in the form of material potentials and of human knowledge referring to the use one can make of a piece of land in the Mediterranean – and the risk one takes in doing that.²³ Cultural reserves and regressions to the past unfold their own ‘dialectic of counter-enlightenment’²⁴ and the humanities, if they want to be sciences of man that are capable of producing valuable knowledge, human orientations, must therefore also always contain material on unprogressive positions and other ‘old stuff’ – it would be short-sighted if, for example, anthropology in future were to concentrate exclusively on cultural forms that appeared hybrid, fluid and multiple even on a global surface. This would be to underestimate the ability of ‘unprogressive’ groups to modernize, revitalize and mobilize.

Space and Time, History and Geography

Culture meets nature: no Catholic baptism without godparents, who in a way substitute, reflect or even mock the existence of the natural parents of the child. Very often a popular misinterpretation of the liturgy attaches itself to this, which says that the godparents act as a kind of relative to the child, that the child’s godparents and parents form a reserve, supporting each other as fictive relatives, and that it is thus an important political and spiritual game who is made a godparent and who is not. Baptized, made a godchild, first communion, engaged, married, mother or father themselves, godparent him or herself and finally anointed, dead, blessed and buried, maybe gone up to heaven – the course of a Catholic’s life is marked by religious and popular rites. Unbaptized children still potentially interact with the dead, for as long as they are not ritually brought peace. Baptized children, however, are in a state of innocence in their childhood until their wedding, like the dead who have gone up to heaven. Sometimes this is reminiscent of the cyclic world views of tribal societies, which, even more than the traditionalist farmers and citizens of the South, have good reasons for the illusion that life repeatedly turns in large circles and sweeps.²⁵ Both forms of life, unbaptized and dying person, the undead and the dead who are not at peace, are close to nature, they need rebaptizing with oil or water, blessing, purifying. In Ripacandida, many people imagined that the souls of people who had died first stay close to their bodies and then become set or rooted in pictures and cemeteries, to then embark on a more or less long journey through limbo. In the end they should stand more or less close to the saints and to Jesus in heaven – or rot in hell. Nonetheless, the practical ordering of people was more important than abstract concepts of heaven and hell: unbaptized souls are close to the dead, while those who have been baptized stand as clients of their godparents, just as they create a lineage to the dead in their family who have long since ascended to heaven. Thus, memories of people who died too early, who did not have a full life, play a special role in the everyday religion. They

are seen as dangerous, their souls are hanging onto life, their early death is seen as punishment for sins they have made. They are impure and bad on several levels, and this is exactly why we have to pay particular attention to them, as I shall show. The Catholic Church has, probably intentionally, no clear teachings to offer in this area and only guards the outer edges of dignity and civil forms, the decorum of the cults and that which it considers the secret of life and the Trinity. Today, within its area of influence, we can observe how this decorum and framework of regulations are more or less strongly adhered to and adjusted – a huge lab of studies on the relationships between religious culture, social order and nature, between the process of civilization or of regression from civilization and the economy of globalization and resources.

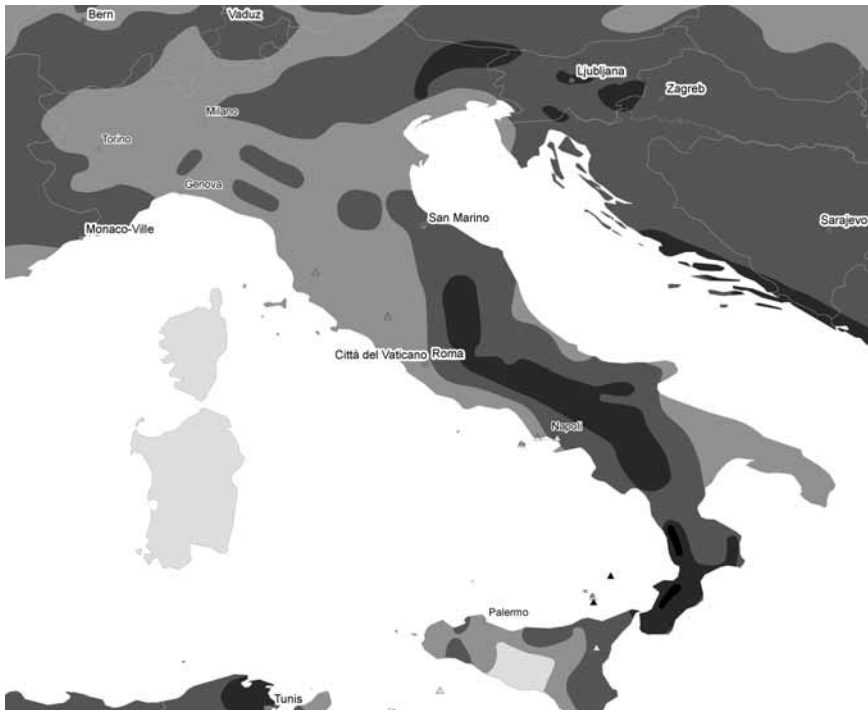
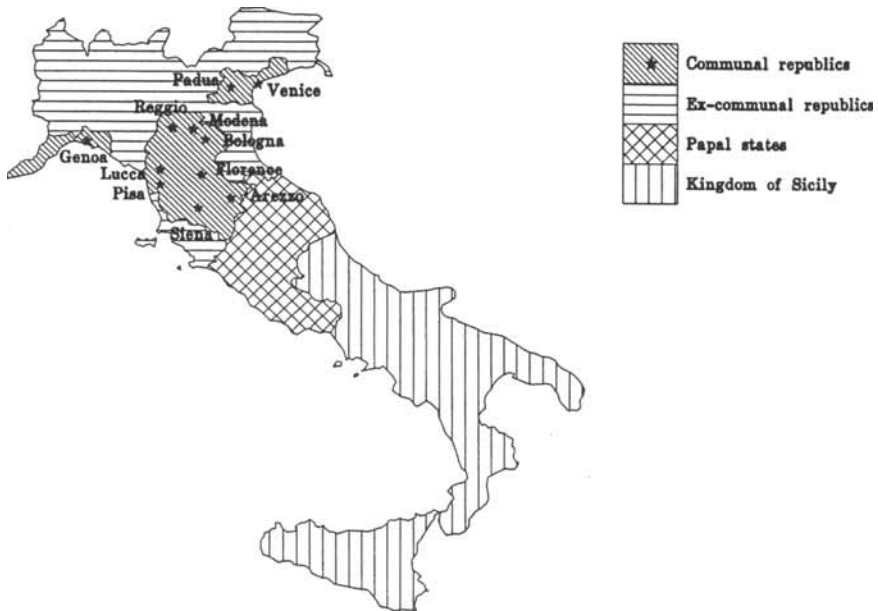
The dead who are not yet mature, not yet oiled, not yet buried, who have not found peace, and the unbaptized children can potentially still interact in terms of time and life history, which in turn corresponds to the agricultural rites that are meant to accompany, even today, the growth and decomposition of nature over the course of the year, even though agriculture is no longer as important as it used to be for the many pensioners, workers, unemployed and bureaucrats in Ripacandida. The winter is the negation of the summer. The most important Christian mysteries of birth, death and resurrection are celebrated at the height of winter and at the beginning of spring and summer. In between, popular religion has scattered its festivals of the saints and the last remaining forms of vegetation rites.²⁶ These temporal courses are always rooted in the rural designations of indigenous geographical cognitions:²⁷ Each child to be baptized has his parish, his church. This parish has its saints, of which it also offers one to the outside world for pilgrimage. Local variations of the Mother of God enliven parishioners with their statue cults and parish rites and those who only want to see transubstantiation and nothing else have to go to a real, living parish, somewhere in this world, in some church or other, at some Catholic altar or other, which in turn will be dedicated to a saint, as is customary, and, what is more, give the latter a real place, real, in the form of a small bone, a body part, and, if it is that tiny, a relic. The consecrated Host is not seriously offered on the Internet or on a television set; there you can only observe the mass like an ethnologist or like a theatre spectator does, but you do not partake in this act and its presumed benevolent effects. This drive for authenticity and localization must be taken seriously if we want to understand and explain the behaviour of Catholics (and that of the devotees of other world religions).

In Ripacandida, a territorial routine has spread out over this area over the centuries which enables every person who lives there to live as a devotee of San Donato – except the Jews banished into exile to this southern place by Mussolini's dictatorship in the 1930s, except the one Moroccan family that lives there in 2007, and except, perhaps, the Romanian prostitute and the Ukrainian women living around 2005 in 'cantone', in the old slum district. Yet it is precisely foreigners who are often asked what they think of the saint. Time and time again, I had to sketch my impressions of the saint and the festival to the people in Ripacandida. A German Jewish intellectual, who seems to have lived in Ripacandida in the 1930s as an exile and as a person banished by fascism, is said to have called the statue ugly and insignificant, whether jokingly or drawing on possible knowledge of art history, and, as the old folk whisper to each other, 'she ended up in the madhouse'. The local symbolic anchor is also offered to the few foreigners as a real bridge to social reality there. The interweaving

of popular cult and official religion repeatedly draws courses of lives and of years to the house of God in the depression between the two hills. In the spring San Donato is brought to the mother church up on the cliff in a festive procession, where he stays until 5 August, his saint's day, the day of remembrance of his beheading in Arezzo in AD 362. He is taken home in a celebratory procession under the hot August sun, to the true *sanctuarium* in front of the boundaries of the old settlement. Three days of celebration follow, and on the third day the dedication of the children also takes place, when mothers can leave their sick children with the saint. Trust in modern medicine is increasing and pictures of children are being left ever more rarely in the sanctuary. However, many families in northern Lucania still know that they can go to San Donato if their children are sick or if they want to protect their children from epilepsy and other seizures. The children of Ripacandida were considered immune, especially if they had been dragged along for three consecutive years behind the statue in the procession, wearing the bishop's robes of the saint.

The cult of the new great saint has adopted much of this, Padre Pio of Pietralcina – his hypermodern pilgrimage centre is only one or two hours away in the car on Monte Gargano. Only twenty-four years after his death in 2002 (almost hastily when we consider religious history), he was canonized by John Paul II. His life is cloaked in exorcisms and imprisonment; Padre Pio draws unto himself all the deep secrets of the southern Italian saint cults and carries them into the third millennium – at the same time he was a highly modern and practical man of the twentieth century, who had his miracle cures confirmed right away in the hospital next door. He himself founded the Hospital of San Giovanni Rotondo and built it up with donations, hiring and firing the doctors who had also to serve as the testimonies to the healing effects of his presence as the new bleeding Christ.²⁸ In Ripacandida in his honour they put in a big rotund place carrying a statue of the new saint, right in the depression near the sports field – free and open spaces that would give shelter in the moment where the earthquake strikes again. Between the sports field and piazza Padre Pio, not in the centre on the hill, I encounter the metal tower adorned with loudspeakers that would inform and instruct the population in the case of catastrophe. The brand new statue of the bearded, modern old man calls over in greeting to the sanctuary of the youthful, archaic San Donato, who could gradually be forgotten a little because of that concurrence. Some residents of Ripacandida no longer allow their small children to dress up and join in the procession, and the ecstatic scenes of the past are exactly that. Yet the procession remains, the depression is still there, and it is still the town's great *sanctuarium*, the field of protection and identity. The picture of Saint Donatus still adorns the website of the commune of Ripacandida like a coat of arms and when the earth shakes, the population will probably gather once again on the noticeably large square in front of the Pilgrimage Church, which is a little more protected from the effects of the earthquake.

Will modern supra-regional cults like that of Padre Pio overtake the cult of San Donato? Or will Padre Pio's cult survive the next earthquake? We do not know. But we do know where the decision will be made, for here everything still has its place. It is the decision, which has to be made again and again, about the degree of civil institutionalization that a landscape can afford. It seems to me that we have reached the point when we can no longer consider these things an expression of historically cultured mentalities alone, but a function of a territory's chances of development. The major earthquakes



Figures 9 and 10. North of the of the historical papal states (checked pattern, fig. 9) Putnam's group located today's Italian regions with an efficient regional government. Their argument about long-lasting consequences of feudal (inefficient) versus civic (efficient) government still waits to be cross-checked with the lasting influence of earthquakes and volcanism on Central and Southern Italian regions (dark patterns, figure 10). Courtesy of Princeton University Press and Munich Re.

that have manifested themselves in northern Lucania on average once a generation for at least 1,000 years are no doubt an important factor here. The American sociologist Robert Putnam upholds the historic tradition of southern Italian mentality, but the correlation between his map of uncivil, badly functioning institutions and the map of earthquake risks over the last 1,000 years should be taken seriously. Questions of catastrophe and of the general natural layout of each landscape that the Catholic Church refers to with its parishes and dioceses should be given more attention in future in the cultural-anthropological debate on persistence and change in Catholicism.

At Ripacandida – as in many other religious fields of southern Italy as well – even the magical practices can be geographically pinpointed; they have a local point. Their ‘bitter truth’²⁹ lies in methods and experiences, that Lucanians of most heterogeneous origins have developed over millennia of living with malaria. If we look at the old town centre on the cliff, Ripacandida lies just above the malaria border and the depression just below it. Even today, some *Ripacandidesi*, when they see me coming back again and again, say: ‘Yes, Ripacandida has good air! You are looking for our *aria buona*’. This ‘good air’ defends against *mal aria*, which people used to think caused the malaria illness. Here, directly on the edge of a natural *sanctuarium* against *Anopheles* mosquitoes, some local healers were able to refine popular knowledge about treating malaria into elaborate rituals and herbal therapies. This then proved applicable to other physical conditions, especially the problems grouped under the term witchcraft and in the end it became the signature of magic for the whole micro landscape that extends in the basin beneath the massif of the Monte Vulture. In the 1930s, at the time of the major campaigns against malaria, a certain Zi Francí began to build up his imaginary empire of healing here, an invisible reserve in the competition between scientific and popular medicine, a force field of honour and curses, of a fear of ghosts and of more or less rational means of magic. Until the 1980s a whole network of relatives of Zi Francí attracted clients from all over Basilicata who suffered from states of weakness and *phlegma*, interpreted as states of possession caused by witches, *streghe* and *stregoni*, who send the souls of the dead, sometimes in the form of little flies, into their victims’ houses.³⁰ How this cultural and cognitive reserve was still elaborated in the 1980s and how it came to an end you can read in the following book.

Those in Ripacandida who are not receptive to magic and supra-regional and regional saint cults, who are not even moved by Padre Pio’s new cult, still gather in a place that limits the spiritual landscape of the village in every respect. Right at the edge, behind the sanctuary, a road branches off to the north-west that leads directly to the cemetery. Here there are a good few generations of dead *Ripacandidesi*. Burial places marked with small, cheap, metal crosses for the children who died in the period of misery in the first half of the twentieth century can be found next to the mausoleums of the powerful families: the Lioy, an ancient noble family with Spanish roots, the Vaccaro, who probably came from a shepherding family, and the Baffari, who can be traced back to the sixteenth century. Many of the graves bear photographs of the person affixed to the gravestone, although this was barely feasible from a technological point of view. Only as the years passed, and as more and more people were laid to rest there whom I had known in person, who had been important to me, did I understand how important the cemetery and the cult of the dead are for the people here. It is a cult centred on images, just like the official Catholic cult in its outer forms

and the popular cult of the saints, which could not exist here without statues and pictures. In southern Italy, pictures of the dead sometimes physically and symbolically stand very close to depictions of the saints, Jesus, Mary and symbolic representations of the Holy Trinity. The cemetery is therefore a landscape of relics. Just as the agricultural calendar, the religious calendar, the festivals of the saints and the course of life on a daily basis and on festival days all overlap, the pictures in the houses and chapels, on the graves and in the churches are also linked. Death and legend, the personal and the foreign meet within the space of memory – which is always also a space that is used practically, inherited, a valuable space that has been worked on. Combined in this way, death, legend and space develop on all kinds of different levels of social interaction into closed complexes of gestures and actions. Authoritarian roles, the father, the godfather, the priest, are occasionally revived and nurtured again at the graves of their former carriers, even when the physical bearer has long since returned to dust. Women play an ambivalent role in this system. It is precisely their sons and nephews who also often greatly honour their remains and images at the graveyards, but in the Christian pantheon of gods, the classic female saints have lost sway. However, the cult of the Mother of God has worked its way right to the top.

Here we find the spatial projection or reproduction of holy and human bodies that stand for each other, of sick children and statues of the saint, of mothers and magi. Despite imbalances and changes, in the eyes of many southern Italians landscapes and people continue to form a flexible whole, marked by bodies, sanctuaries, a visibly located holy status. We have no difficulty observing in these processes applications and corrections of that central practice which runs through all aspects of Christianity of any hue, namely, the realization of an eternal God on earthly territories in the form of one man, the sublation of all human corporeality and their destinies in unity with this man. Here, sociologists talk of role and status. Every life contributes to the fundamental social standardizations of status with its commitment, its sacrifice, its lies and its compulsions, in short with its role play, and also to its reform, to the revision of social rules. Those for whom this serious game becomes too difficult can launch themselves into that literalism which seems to form the basis of all fundamentalisms, of taking what is consistent all too seriously, and indulging in the all too unambiguous interpretation of the holy texts. Problems of manoeuvring in science and religion seemingly coincide on this point, and this might be the reason why the great problems of the cultural sciences is that of getting rid of their continuous dependency or, better, fixation on ‘culture as text’. And, at the other, the enlightened, end of the continuum of belief and criticism, those people make their presence felt who find no kind of performance authentic and only ever want to see in everything things that have been borrowed and invented. In between, the reality of the religious continues and probably the reality of life too, which is so difficult to grasp, and thus also the reality of science.³¹

Political cults can continue taking root in the total facts of social life in the corporatist-clientelistic Catholic life of Italy. It is not for nothing that anthropologists of the 1950s and 1960s talked about Italian ‘parochialism’ (*campanilismo*) when old-fashioned clientelistic networks are on the agenda and these local factions are still not completely powerless, for often they stretch very high up in the political world of the peninsula, here ‘everyone still has a saint in Heaven’.³² Clientelism, lack of individual *presenza*,³³ possession as the surrender of the individual mind to a speaking tongue –

sometimes even today, the shrill cry or whimpering of one possessed fulfils time and space; to bring this order to a head, to put it to the test, people are made aware of a simultaneousness of life and death, which we are otherwise used to ascribing to extra-European religions. It is here that, in particular, the art of the women lies, the female magi, the possessed, the women who heal the possessed, the mothers of San Donato or just simply the women who devotedly tend the graves in the isolated cemetery week after week. They are in a certain sense outsiders in their own father-centred families, even though they are often the real centre of their families, and not even their own children bear their name. It is not until they can attract attention and make money with their arts, which goes for the arts of cooking and teaching just as much as magic and cult, that the men accept it.

Mediterranean Perspectives

Today, some people, and even some scholars, make a big point about the fact that Islam has not, as they say, been able to bring itself to separate fully the social and political order from religion. Yet in southern Italy you can observe how laborious this process of separation has been in Europe and how incomplete it still is. Here they still stand by their saints in their sanctuaries, excellent cadavers that mark dream and time and, as though in passing, in so doing also embody, articulate and correct social order and make it bearable. And, in southern Italy, what the saints cannot do is not always passed over straight away to national politics, as in Central Europe, or to private despair. Here, when nothing is going right any more, you can still go to a female magus, who strokes her patients with baptizing movements and who takes the evil influence from them and pours it away, who gives them a few bitter herbs, that have it in them and then perhaps someone feels sick and, with a bit of luck, everything is all right again. Once, they told me, people from Ginestra came to the mayor in the night with a sick pig, because they thought he could heal it. The people in Ripacandida also say of the inhabitants, of Albanian origin, of a neighbouring village that they mistook a Jesus which someone had put in the snow like a snowman for a real Jesus. They prayed to Him and afterwards put Him in the bakery oven to warm up, so that they could go and eat in peace. When they came back to honour their Holy Visitor once more, there was just a puddle of water on the floor and they were astonished: 'Jesus really had to go pee pee into the corner of that oven, and then moved on'. These are the jokes of people who see themselves as exposed to primitive contempt and answer it with irony. However, they also tie an everyday religiosity into their irony, in which under *fede*, faith, they imagine above all a wedding ring (*la fede*), in which under trinity they imagine a patron saint to protect them against bad weather and in which they caress statues of the saints 'like a child, they like that. That is how we show them that we love them'. In turn, these same people differentiate their relationship to the supernatural very clearly and frequently say: 'The saint, the statue, that is just a piece of lime, the true saint is up in Heaven'.

Every culture has its intelligence and its irrationalism. The much-quoted society of the *do ut des*, where they trade with the supernatural and have completely transformed faith into a business, only seems to exist in exceptional cases. It is also clear to the people in southern Italy that mixing up nature and culture, politics and religion has its

limits. You can communicate with the saints and attract their attention, but you cannot trade with a saint, who, when the opportunity presents itself, stands, invisible, over the people and hits them until they writhe in pain. Uncomprehending, the *devoti* look at the priest when he rants about the *do ut des* yet again in his sermon, without any knowledge of the local realities of popular religious trading. He is of no more and no less worth to them than the television sets they sometimes keep going all day long without ever focusing on them. Yet here nothing is perfect and the people, who speak so sensibly when they are calm, sometimes still try, against their better judgement, to follow the priest or to assail the saint or use black magic against their worst enemies. Yet they know that it is not within their power, that hardly anything is within their power. They perhaps know that even better than those Europeans and Americans who always believe that they are able to differentiate precisely between politics and religion or between social order and religion. Instead of getting irate about Islam, which allegedly mixes up social and religious order, we should sit down and think about the fact that generations of our ancestors survived with the help of such mix-ups and jokes about mix-ups. As a German, I know all too well how quickly even an enlightened, modern nation can forget the difference between politics and religion again. I was born nineteen years after 1936 near the large stadium used for Hitler's Olympic Games, and I know what I am talking about. Mass enthusiasm for a unitarian gestalt is not all too alien to me, or, better, it is all too close and not so very 'uncanny'.

Bodies inscribe themselves in bodies, space manifests itself in time into a whole. Newly baptized children are placed under their godparents' care, who ask the saints to intercede with God on behalf of their godchildren. A Jesus looks at us from His plinth; He has His cross with Him and is wearing a white coat, and He is stretching His arms towards us in a gesture of welcome and acceptance. In a modest, peasant dwelling there are photographs of dead people right next to small figures of the saints and pictures of Mary on bedside tables and headboards. Year after year, the 'Mother Church', the pilgrimage sanctuary and Padre Pio Square shape themselves into new, ceremonial plays, at which a few small children are observed once more, who look out from their bishop's robes more or less happily, a small bishop's crosier in their hand. And there, where the corporate gradations and classifications fail, where the power of the priests and doctors stops, that is where the female magi start to act. They have their patients find and gather up small remains of bones and coffin nails at the cemetery, the remains of dead people, which are meant to help the living once more, to be active in their place. That is the folklore of Ripacandida. It overcomes the dark, seizures, lets the people come into the light with the saints and their processions and if something still does not work, then a female healer or a male magus will try to put it right in the half-light of their kitchen.

The much-quoted Mediterranean family works above all on the basis of this gradation of living and dead bodies in landscapes and their mobilization in a yearly course that culminates in the life of Jesus in terms of both the vegetation cycle and the history of healing. This means that forces that work against the nuclear family and for its expansion are anchored in the nuclear family itself²⁴ – it is the contradictory and mysterious relationships between the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, Joseph) on the one hand and the Holy Trinity (Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit) on the other that are important here. Although the parish of Jesus and the parish of Saint Donatus demon-

stratively consist of families, a more agitated version, which is always integrated into the Christian scheme, advises people to leave their families, i.e. to get married and have a family, to become a monk, nun or cleric – or they must sit separately during mass at the very least, the men and the women, or devote their lives in phases exclusively to the saints on pilgrimages. Many popular legends revolving around San Donato strengthen this contradiction, when, for example, someone returning home after having emigrated is punished with seizures because he has let himself be persuaded to first find his sister in Ripacandida. It is only then that the migrant remembers that he owes San Donato a visit in his pilgrimage sanctuary. The saint hits the already homesick man unmercifully with convulsions. With this special order of time, space and body, the family can be reduced to the classic duality of children and parents. If there is a place where the selfish small family of the modern age was invented and strengthened by collectivist world religions, then it is the Mediterranean region, the bordering Middle East and the Indian subcontinent and surrounding countries. Here, the extended families that function on the basis of systems of lineage and spatially oriented bodies were broken long ago, long before elsewhere in the world.³⁵ Yet, from time to time, state and capitalist consumer society are again so weak, are so infrastructurally endangered by crusades of conquest from the depths of the three bordering continents, by earthquakes, landslides, drought and floods³⁶ that it seems advisable to keep the zone of family trust in a state of flexibility.

It is for this reason that the four major religious communities of the Mediterranean region have developed large institutions like the cult of the saints and godparenthood. These institutions are preserved, at least in memory and as pure opportunity for action, as a cultural reserve. They hold the image of a life upright where the central classification of the people does not take the nuclear family as its starting point, but rather an extended family, a parish or a network that is virtually made up of relatives. In this respect, the cults of godparenthood and of the saints are typically found in one category and yet opposite each other, for the saints never break their promises and their power is never as wavering and earthly as that of the godparents. Cults of trust in godparents and saints are still important, in order to facilitate things and as the ideal version of human behaviour; the rules about the body, space and social structures are still in force which were once invented for ancient city states, feudal dictatorships with religious embellishment and charismatic movements, the rules that attempted to translate embodied pathos-filled lines of compassion into new classifications. These cults are not a quality exclusive to Mediterranean culture; north of the Alps they were as important in Catholic areas until 1820 as they are today in the Mediterranean region. It is simply a question of national stability in the disaster-prone regions how long and at what point the old corporate order of the godparents and the saints will be important again. The anthropology of the forms of government cannot be separated from the geography and economy of the area concerned and the anthropology of the body and of medicine cannot be separated from social anthropology. You can recognize theological foundations and national maxims of Catholic areas on your own body – if you work with the people, pray with them and, for example, visit their female magi. In my opinion, the deeper personal motivation of many ethnologists can often be found in this viscerally interpreted participation.³⁷ Yet what they get from it is also important for those who are not used to thinking in visceral

categories and who focus more strongly on the macrosocial, macropolitical, legal, economic and other general conditions of societies that have to bank on serious difficulties on the road to modernization and therefore sometimes even regions of the world that have stronger positions in terms of industry and government appear to be difficult and an obstacle to development.

A precondition for this participation is always the methods that the people being studied use to admit foreigners into their milieu. If you come from the north or from Central Europe, that can easily assume the character of treating people as guests, which they use for potential godparents and patrons. In my case it was, in time, almost possible to assume the character of a participation in the holy character of the most important foreigner of whom the tiny agricultural village boasts, of San Donato: 'You have done so much for the Saint with your research, you can ask him for something too'. A precondition for the grading of crisis and routine for the purposes of healing and well-being is the right mixture of personal and foreign elements. San Donato had to come to Ripacandida as a foreigner, from Arezzo – the people who told me the story imagined this to be a real journey, but we also know that religious propaganda campaigns were involved, which met with the local echo of social interest groups. The prophet counts for nothing in his own country, San Donatello can never win over San Donato, the foreign saint occupies the safest place in the whole landscape, namely, the depression of Ripacandida.

Practice

Some female magi in Ripacandida I worked with kept on telling me about the 'witches' (*um'ar*, *um'asciar*), who are also passed down in more ancient folklore literature about Lucania.³⁸ There are people who are 'born with the shirt'.³⁹ They are not only baptized, they have also already, in the moment of birth, brought with themselves a sign of purification and healing into the world, an amnion, which as a second skin helps them, like a wing, to be able to fly. They can go anywhere they want and in the past they are said to have really loved exploring people's pantries and enriching themselves. On certain nights of the year, they gather on the border of the papal lands, on the highest massif. The witches of Benevento, the *streghe di Benevento*, fly there to dance under the walnut tree, which indeed also provides one of the worst medicines against witchcraft, concoctions on the basis of bitter-tasting leaves and herbs that cause nausea and exorcist vomiting. In the daytime, however, when the *ma'ar* are working peacefully on their land or sitting in their houses, you can visit them and have them treat you – for skin diseases, for headaches caused by the evil eye. Sometimes they also heal the pale figures who have been cursed, of whom you can hardly tell, even today, whether they are indeed perhaps victims of malaria or children of its victims, or whether they are people who are physically going through difficult mental crises. Whatever the case may be, they have to be rubbed with magic and baptized, and bitter herbs help them to be sick and thus unload the evil on the rest of the world. The historian and anthropologist Carlo Ginzburg described this old alternative religion for the early modern age in the mountainous Italian region of Friuli. I saw it still in practice in the late twentieth century and only the next fifteen or twenty years or

so will show whether it really has perished or will experience a revival, has already done so, and if it will take on terrible new forms of witchcraft in the citadels of civilization, in the form of fundamentalism or a charismatic Catholic cult.

When the *ma'ar* or *masciare* take something away from someone in the night, they give it to someone else in the day. The witches keep things flowing and redistribute the song of the people within limits. In short, they represent a mixture of what people in many other societies since the period of witch hunting have liked to distinguish as 'witch' on the one hand and Christian healer woman or saint cult on the other, as black and white magic. Saint Donatus is the sickness that he heals and the sanctuary that protects the people, who, however, are scared of him – similar to the good/evil gods of Hinduism and older forms of the Indo-Aryan religions. Sanctuary or main church with a priest, flying witches or *ma'ar* or official cult, agrarian practices and images in Eurasia have coexisted for a long time with the monotheism of the religions of the Book in these extensions. Even in ancient Israel, the cult of a weather god on his mountain seems to have complemented people's devotion to Yahweh, in a relationship of mutual support and limitation, of distortion and contrast.⁴⁰

This ancient strain of religious practice survived in the area around the extinct volcano Vulture until the 1990s, even though the cult of the muses, of which Horace writes and to which he traced his talent, died out at Vulture long ago and was replaced by worship of the Archangel Saint Michael. The official cult of the saint still contains demonic elements, as we can easily see from the example of San Donato, but the unofficial magic accompanied him like a negative force and further signalled the shallows of religion. The saint's places were and are the pilgrimage church as you approach the town and the main church on the cliff, while places of magic were the cemetery and secluded corners in the landscape, crossroads, at which the paths of good and evil were able to be relaid. Like the modernizers today, with their helicopters and aerial photos, they observed the landscape from a great height, on a magical flight. It is a special type of Asian shamanism, which is intersected by African rituals of community and possession.⁴¹ I only came upon this after a lot of investigation, because the people involved saw it as perfectly natural.⁴² As with the family secret of San Donato, it involves intimate knowledge, so to speak, of the ritual practices of northern Lucania, which were so natural to many of those involved that for that reason alone they did not believe they had to tell outsiders. But they repeatedly shared them with me, and other things, when they could be sure that I, as a foreigner, would take these stories of estrangement and change home with me and that once there, I would not be able to or want to talk much about them. In this paradoxical way, I was indeed drawn into the Catholic way of life, in which one thing can stand for another, a picture for a dead person, a person for a god and an ethnologist for a saint.

It is about saliva and tears. The female specialists in northern Lucania sometimes call these bodily substances and a very particular situation *la lizza*. When they heal someone, it can happen that saliva and tears run down their cheeks. Sometimes this is even considered a condition for the success of the treatment. 'The patients come with pale cheeks and leave with rosy cheeks, and the healers experience the opposite'. Estrangement and transformation between the two leaves behind a new distance. The healer has helped. She is different. When I asked how a practitioner from Rionero in Vulture coped when she took on the headaches of her patients tormented by the 'evil eye' time

and time again, she said nothing, but took a packet of German ‘*Spali*’ headache tablets from her oversized American refrigerator. ‘Bear ye one another’s burdens’, we could put it that way, borrowing from the quote from St Paul (Gal. 6:2). Thus, in the back rooms of the magi, in the place of foreignness and mystery, we re-encounter ‘compassion’, which is at the centre of Christian belief. With their tears, the healer women from northern Lucania put me on the trail of a theory of magic that has both a material and practical basis, but which in the end is materialistic. Trained in interpreting symbols and in cultural studies, I was now able to redeem in a complex way older materialistic approaches, such as Marx’s theory of religion and Gramsci’s dialectic of cultural inferiority and superiority in the class system, at least in terms of the question of elementary connections between biology and ritual, material circumstances in life and a ‘world view of passion’.⁴³ However, in order to do this I had to remove the role of the individual in culture and society from the generalizations and essentialisms that have often accompanied the comparison of individual and society. In this context, I think it indicative that there is a kind of civilized version of the intimate and real ritual that is very widespread in Italy, namely, to ward off the evil eye, someone drops water onto a plate of oil. The resulting forms are then studied for ‘eyes’, which are then poured out of the window together with the oil while the people chant incantations – the next person who comes by can now ‘take on’ and carry the evil with him.⁴⁴

An Italian ethnologist conducted her field research very close to Ripacandida, in Sannio Beneventino, also among the healer women. She calls southern Italian shamanism’s journeys of the soul ‘*itinerari delle emozioni*’.⁴⁵ The women attempt, through magic, to integrate, or to ‘twist’, to ‘deflect’, as Martin Heidegger⁴⁶ fittingly described it, into the individual all that which escaped the official methods of crisis management. Mariella Pandolfi focuses her analysis on the cultural aspects in that irreducible rest of individuality, which does not appear to fit into the culture, while I, lastly, am trying to measure its natural parts, the physiology of fear and desire, which forms the basis of witchcraft just as much as the most lofty and flawless faith.

Some of the healer women renew the incantations, which they repeat for themselves until the saliva of emotion and the tears of compassion flow down their cheeks, once a year at Christmas.⁴⁷ Then, the deepest mystery of the Christian faith, the birth, incarnation and baptism of God, encounters the most problematic experiences, the experiences of estrangement that people can have from themselves and from others, a wish to die and fear of death, fear of others’ gazes and of their evil tongues. The healer women are fully conscious when they recite their incantations. They sit silently at mass, join in with the gestures, but in their hearts they repeat, renew, their wealth of incantations. The healing words are reborn with Jesus, although the followers of magic, like its opponents, repeatedly locate it clearly in the period before Jesus (*prima di Gesù*). This uncivilized and yet civilized magic does not always only contain incantations that can please the priests, but neither does it consist purely of unchristian curses. Most of the time it involves incantations embellished with Christian elements of good against evil in the style of Jesuit and other monkish exempla from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ‘magical mobilizations of the Catholic pantheon of gods’, as the Italian ethnologist and philosopher Ernesto de Martino⁴⁸ once put it. These incantations are allegedly recorded in magic books, although I only saw a very modern one and Christian one in Ripacandida. This book contained not one of the incantations currently circulating and its owner had specialized in evoking the spirits of the dead with the

help of an old axe and a number of other utensils. But perhaps what was more important in terms of such books was the idea that the cultural reserve of magic is recorded somewhere properly. Today, some elderly people in northern Lucania are still waiting for an Italian version of my book, which I have to this day not been able to facilitate owing to numerous problems – obviously my book is meant to be this reserve today, even though it is only available in German and English for the time being, and this again fully conforms with the dialectic of the foreign with the personal, of crisis with annual and daily routine in the popular religion and medicine of Basilicata. My book thus strengthens practical aspects in Ripacandida that my informants made me aware of. This book is above all an essay about ‘viscerally’⁴⁹ comprehensible, physical practices and habits, about related universalisms that create new localisms, limited and fostered by the givens of the Mediterranean landscape of southern Italy. Even if these local habits are not biologically identical from case to case, they do illustrate the way human physiology and cognition develop in relation to historically specific forms of Mediterranean catastrophe and continuity, which are, however, sometimes visibly and drastically manoeuvred by the ‘*longue durée*’⁵⁰ of the geostrategic stratum – a relational space, not an essence, not just the dispositive of human wish and power, but individuals, groups, and material realities acting on each other on and on, from age to age.

Notes

1. I started in October 1982 to do stationary fieldwork in this southern Italian agrotown of 1700–2000 inhabitants, situated in the north of the Basilicata region, which is sometimes also called Lucania. Lucania and Ripacandida are situated right between the metropolitan regions of Bari and Naples, far away from the coast, in the centre of the southern Italian Apennines. I stayed there with my family until the end of August 1984. Then I returned for stays of two to eight weeks every year until 1991. Service as a guest professor in Naples (Istituto Universitario Orientale) in 1984–1985 and in Rome (at University La Sapienza) in 1992 gave me the occasion to travel in the Basilicata for another two extended periods. After 1992, I went to Ripacandida every two years approximately, for a week or two, sometimes for a month, and I continue to do so at the present time.

The results of my fieldwork have been published in the form of numerous articles (in English: Hauschild, 1992; 2008b) and of two books (my *habilitationsschrift* on cults of saints, Hauschild, 1994a, and ‘*Macht und Magie in Italien*’, Hauschild, 2002, second edition 2003). The present volume is a translation of part II and III of ‘*Macht und Magie in Italien*’ (Hauschild 2002, pp. 239–515) financed by the European Association of Social Anthropologists and effected by Dr Jeremy Gaines.

2. Bevilacqua, 1992.
3. Pietrafesa, 1981, see also Horden and Purcell, 2000, pp. 298–341.
4. Dante, *Purgatory*, XIV.
5. Hauschild, 2002, pp. 559–572.
6. <http://www.comune.ripacandida.pz.it/articles.asp?id=138>, accessed on 5 May, 2007.
7. See *ibid.*; Hauschild, 2002, pp. 54–76.
8. Lützenkirchen et al., 1981, pp. 31–52.
9. All passages that do not quote literary sources and are in quotes in this and in the following text are words that I have heard spoken in Ripacandida by my informants and have collected and recorded.
10. Leopoldo Chiari, 1790–1849 and William D(onato) Philipps, Nobel Prize in physics 1997 – his mother was born in 1913 in Ripacandida.
11. See Hauschild, 2002, pp. 54–76.
12. Lützenkirchen et al., 1981, pp. 35–36, Hauschild, 2002, pp. 54–76.
13. See the online publication of the archaeological survey published by archaeologist Dr Elisabeta Setari, www.sandonatoripacandida.net, entry ‘La necropolis di Ripacandida’, accessed 24 October, 2007.

14. See Hauschild, 2002, pp. 559–572.
15. Oral communications: Dr Wolfgang Brüstle from the Regional Institute of Geology and Resources, Baden Württemberg, Germany (Landesamt für Geologie, Rohstoffe und Bergbau) and Dr Klaus Klinge from the Central Seismological Observatory at Erlangen, Germany. See also <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/nca/3Dgeologic/>, consulted 25 October, 2007.
16. See Hauschild, 2002, pp. 559–572.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Rom. 11: 9.
19. Favret-Saada, 1980; Desjarlais, 1992; Csordas, 2002; Hauschild, 2006; see also Wilce, 2006, as a platform for the deconstruction of the politics of deconstruction.
20. Levi, 1977, pp. 116–118.
21. Hauschild, 2002, pp. 559–572.
22. Herzfeld, 1992.
23. Horden and Purcell, 2000: p. 298.
24. Adorno and Horkheimer, 1973.
25. See also Strehlow, 1947, ff. p. 111 for an approach that stresses the play between realism and illusion in the rituals of Australian aborigines, see also Eliade, 1959.
26. Tak, 2000; Hauschild, 2002, pp. 77–111.
27. Kramer and Marx, 1993.
28. Luzzatto, 2007.
29. See ch. 5, ‘Bitter Truths’.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Deleuze, 1993; Latour, 1999.
32. See Sydel Silverman’s intriguing analysis of agency in the adaptation of networks of patronage to new social, political and economic challenges, Silverman, 1977.
33. See De Martino, 1995a, 2005.
34. Goody, 1983.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Horden and Purcell, 2000, pp. 173–400.
37. Favret-Saada, 1980; Desjarlais, 1992.
38. Hauschild, 2002, pp. 225–238.
39. Ginzburg, 1983; Hauschild, 2002, pp. 25, 60, 209.
40. Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001.
41. The last-mentioned North African and Mediterranean aspect was left unexplored in Ginzburg’s path-breaking study of the origins of north Italian traditions of shamanism and possession, see Ginzburg, 1983, 1991; but see Hauschild, 2007, for a discussion of dialogue between the northern and the southern Shore of the Mediterranean.
42. Only two local researchers made this discovery; before I did, and both are, not accidentally I would presume, women colleagues. One of them is Dr Angela Anastasia Rosati (then living at Rionero in Vultura, ten miles from Ripacandida), who published her findings about beliefs and practices maintained in her own family in a local Italo-Albanian journal (see Anastasia Rosati 1981). Her folkloric research among women of the Albanian-Italian minority sharpened my perceptions of the performance and channelling of emotions through rituals of healing. Professor Elsa Guggino arrived at precisely this same central aspect of magic by way of practicing with the followers of magic for a long time, especially in connection with thousands of letters she received following radio broadcasts on the theme of magical healing (see Guggino, 1978). Talking to two other academics encouraged me to vigorously appreciate the knowledge of the women of Ripacandida and to take note of it, Professor Clara Gallini (Rome) and Professor Mariella Pandolfi (Montreal; see Pandolfi, 1990, 1991).
43. Kramer, 1984; see also Heelas, 1981a, b.
44. Di Nola, 1994.
45. Pandolfi, 1991.
46. *Verwindung*, see Heidegger, 1967.
47. Hauschild, 2002, p. 289, and see Ch. 2 of this book.
48. Gallini, 1997.
49. Desjarlais, 1992; Csordas, 2002
50. Braudel, 1992.