

Images from the territory. The imaginary as a form of organisation of the territory between Langa and Monferrato

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The thesis, conducted in the territory, has been started in the area included between Langa and Monferrato. I considered that the choice of the geographic points in which the informers were contacted was important, since these points area characterized by a greater cultural preservation of the phenomenon "Imaginary" for us, but material reality for the inhabitants of the sites.

The *methodology of intervention* is particularly aimed at an activity of survey of the oral sources by recordings on tape, supported by a huge bibliografy, both at local and not local level. The stories are linked to places of action and to definite cultural arcas: the apparition of a dead person, of the devil, of the figure of the "masca", of the priest happens in precise geographic places wich are often the same environment of the narrator. The great patrimony of the oral tradition, even if circumscribed in a specific area, reveals the universality, the necessity of correlating the different events, even the most banal, with a more general mechanism. The *masca* or the witch can be considered a phenomenon, a result of the difficult farmer life which is a life of privation and hardship. Each unexpected or mysterious fact without a possible and logical answer was and is often imputable to this figure. The *masca* was often described to me. She is an old woman, she has a dark complexion and is dark-haired, she almost always "operates" by night, she fears the sacred, she perfectly knows the practices of the natural medicine, she is taken away from the community, both physically and culturally.

Her role is never positive, determined by the envy and the will of causing evil, by hitting men and animals by that force which is indicated by the noun "*fisica*" (physics).



The tool of power of the "*masche*" is the famous book of the command which is exactly named "*Magico*" (Magic). "It was written in Latin, by nineteenth – century handwriting. It contained many formulas, but the ones that I could read were nothing but transcriptions of exorcism rites quoted in the books of the church". In greek magical texts foreign meanings, but they were given mysterious meanings, able to evoke hidden powers.

A particularly ambiguous aspect of this "Imaginary" is marked by the figure of the priest, whose spiritual powers are suppressed by others which are purely material. The priest is the one who knows and "operates" at the same time, he sees the future, "operates with the dead people", "he knows the formula", he sends the storms away and fosters the harvest.

I have extrapolated two sections the first is dedicated to the proverbs, the other to the natural curative medicine.



A part of the research analyses the "refuge of the masche", where they "operated", from an architectural point of view. It is a monument of life a now rediscovered and valorized past. We notice the evolving of the building beginning from the Alta Langa where it is named "Ciabot" or "Cadilù" (house of wolf), to beyond the banks of Tanaro river, where the figure of the masca lives in a common countryside farmhouse. In the Alta Langa the building presents a geografic position of extreme isolation, placed in woods or at the bottom of a scarp. It is a small building, wich is curious because of its small size dimensions: it is narrow and high, respectful of the landscape which it dialogues with l'he position is carefully chosen towards the orientation, the sun and the direction of winds.

The buildings have two floors at most. In the ground floor the space was divided according to the family requirements and for the animals. The windows were small and had iron grills; the wooden front door was upholstered by heads of round nails. We can schematize the position of these buildings inside the landscape.

1. the topographie position
2. the form of the building.
3. the presence of material (inside and outside the building) and legendary traces.

The building was stony and had some wooden parts. It was built using little lime, the walls were dryly erected by simple materials which were found and processed in that zone. Stone was dryly erected by simple materials which were found and processed in that zone. Stone was always tool of religious language, perhaps because of its feature of eternity which is able to testify, in the course of time, the contact between man and God. In many popular beliefs stone is considered opportune to divinize and to make auspices. Stone is substantially considered endowed with superior power.

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