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What Are the Boundaries? Discerning “Pietas” from “Superstitio” in a Frontier Diocese: The Pastoral Action of the Bishops of Como between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

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Abstract: Between the 16th and 17th centuries, the conservative characteristic of rural environments and mountain communities represented one of the main worries of the Larian Church, which, despite the work of reform of religious customs undertaken by the order of preachers in the late Middle Ages (not unrelated to the genesis of the accusation of diabolic witchcraft), it found itself confronted with the shortcomings (from the interference of the laity in religious life to suspicious devotions via the mixture of the sacred and magical animistic legacies) originating from decades of neglect in the management of valley parishes and the laxity of the secular clergy. This concern had to be reconciled, from the first decades of the sixteenth century onward, with the need to counter the Protestant presence. The “singular” way in which diocesan ordinaries sought in the aftermath of the Tridentine Council to re-establish orthopraxy in the only diocese in the peninsula subject to secular authorities of the Reformed faith, and in which an Italophone Protestant community was permanently present for several decades, represents an important case study for understanding the anomaly of the local bishop’s courts (and the inquisition) transformed during this time from bitter enemies of the secta strigiarum into “witch lawyers”, and for illuminating the deeper reasons for the limits of the fight against superstitions in the entire peninsula.

Keywords: diocese of Como; bishops; superstition; witchcraft; magic; Catholic Church; Protestant Churches; Inquisition



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1. Introduction

The origins of the diocese date back to the end of the 4th century, with the establishment of the first bishop in Como, Felice (around 386–391). The influence exerted by the diocese of Como was most likely responsible for the Christianization of the Valleys of the Adda and Mera. During the Middle Ages, due to close relationships with kings and emperors, the bishops of Como obtained multiple temporal privileges, laying the foundation for dominion over a broad, albeit not homogeneous, territory. The history of the episcopal see of Como was marked by strong antagonism with the neighboring Ambrosian archdiocese: between 606 and 608, Como confirmed its allegiance to the schism of the Three Chapters, of which Bishop Abbondio (around 449–468) was one of the main inspirers. Following the division, the diocese of Como separated from the Milanese see, submitting to the patriarchate of Aquileia, whose rite it maintained until modern times. The rivalry between the two episcopal sees, which intensified especially between the 10th and 12th centuries when the bishops also exercised extensive temporal power, gradually diminished during the course of the 15th century.

After subduing the city of Como to the Duchy of Milan, several members of Milanese noble families obtained the episcopal see of the Larian area, while the ducal authority exercised control over certain aspects of the diocesan administration, especially in economic management and beneficiary matters. In the late Middle Ages, the functioning of the

episcopal curia and the contacts with the vast territory were entrusted to the vicars general, who somehow managed to administer the assets of the Larian Church and ensure control over religious life, thanks also to the decisive contribution of the powerful and organized Dominican order. Evident since the 15th century, the decline of the diocese intensified in the 16th century, with the transfer of some parishes from the Bailiwicks of Ticino to the original Cantons (1500–1516), and the Adda and Mera Valleys (with the parishes of Poschiavo and Brusio) under the control of the Grisons (1512), who managed to establish stable governance only with the Diet of Ilanz in 1515. The configuration of the ancient Larian diocese, destined to persist until the second half of the 19th century, took shape from the late Middle Ages (13th century), encompassing territories that extended well beyond the ancient Roman municipium, stretching as far as the Alpine passes (Lucomagno, Spluga, Maloja, Bernina, and Stelvio). Among the most extensive in the peninsula, it came to include the entire current province of Sondrio (Valchiavenna, Valtellina, and Bormiese); part of that of Como (the city and the suburban area known as “pieve di Zezio”); Fino and Uggiate, two parishes south of the capital; the western shore of Lake Como with the Valley Intelvi; two valleys in the present-day province of Varese (Valcuvia and Valmarchirolo) and some territories of Lecco (the parish church of Mandello)¹.

The diocese had irregular borders, particularly in the areas of the present-day Canton Ticino, where the bishop of Como exercised his jurisdiction over the parishes of Balerna, Mendrisio, Riva San Vitale, Lugano, Agno, Locarno, and Bellinzona, with the exception of the parish of Biasca (including the Blenio, Leventina, and Riviera valleys), which together with Brissago and Tesserete belonged to the diocese of Milan. In 1885, the parish churches of the Canton of Ticino became part of the Apostolic Administration of Ticino, then the Diocese of Lugano, while in 1871, the Poschiavo Valley came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Chur (Canton of Grisons) (Orsini 1954). The large area over which the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Lake Como extended, at the foot of the Alps, on the border between the Italian-speaking South and the German-speaking North, was strategically and economically crucial, being crossed by the main military routes commercial (terrestrial and lake) that connected the two worlds². From the point of view of political relations between the center and the periphery, the diocese was strongly affected by the process that led to the absorption of the Municipality of Como into the Milanese domains first of the Visconti, then of the Sforzeschi, and finally of the Spanish, and then of the conflicts that arose from the contrast between the dominant and the neighboring Swiss Cantons that would become acute in the aftermath of the Reformation, when the diocese became the forerunner of Catholicism against the rampant Protestant propaganda. In particular, the situation that arose in the Adda and Mera Valleys was very delicate, in the aftermath of the Religious Dispute of Ilanz in January 1526, when the Common Diet of Grisons proclaimed the free exercise of the Catholic and Reformed confessions, marking in fact the passage “from below” of the Three Leagues to the Protestant camp³. This was at the origin of a climate of persistent tension in the second half of the sixteenth century, destined to lead, in the following one, to a dramatic religious and military conflict, when these valleys became the scene of the Italian appendix of the Thirty Years’ War.

In 1526, the absorption of Como into the Spanish dominions and the simultaneous spread of the Reformation made relations between the bishops and the secular authorities of the Italian-speaking valleys even more delicate. In fact, unlike Locarno, where the local Reformed community was forced to emigrate (1555), in the application of the provisions on common bailiwicks established by the second Treaty of Kappel (1531), an important Italian Protestant community settled in Valtellina which, enjoying the protection of Chur, represented for several decades a constant cause of apprehension for the Church of Como and for the State of Milan. In 1604, the refusal of the Three Leagues to enter into a treaty of alliance with the Spanish governor exacerbated the political tensions that resulted in a series of popular revolts within the Alpine republic, exacerbating the inter-religious conflicts in the Adda and Mera Valleys, culminating during the Thirty Years’ War in the uprising of Valtellina (1620), which remained independent for twenty years before being

returned to Chur with the Capitulate of Milan (1639). In addition to the religious contrasts and political conflicts between the great powers, there were also those deriving from the autonomist ambitions of Valtellina and Val Chiavenna, which intended to accentuate their independence from Como, undermining their territorial integrity.

The fragmentation of political power, the overlapping of interests and jurisdictions, the struggles for control of the Alpine passes, inevitably influenced the very relations between Rome and its local, regular and secular representatives, including the highest ecclesiastical offices, from the bishop to the inquisitor. Here, in fact, more than in the rest of the peninsula, the papal authority encountered many difficulties in asserting its prerogatives, both with the representatives of the Three Leagues and with the Catholic leaders themselves, even in the aftermath of the “Sacred Slaughter” (19 July 1620), when Valtellina became independent from Chur for a short period⁴.

2. Discerning “Pietas” from “Superstitio”

To make the effectiveness of pastoral action even more difficult, there was the persistent gap between a highly developed urban center and the “backward” valley communities, which were laboriously Christianized over the centuries and on whose religious life the network of ecclesiastical control, which was moreover lacking, was still struggling to be exercised effectively (Canobbio 2012). The general conditions in which the diocese found itself in the late Middle Ages seem consistent with the framework within which, beyond the Alps the process of reconquest and confessionalization of rural and especially mountainous conservative areas began, from which the heresy of diabolical witchcraft originated and in which the first hunts in Europe manifested themselves with virulence. Also in the diocese of Como as in the Ambrosian one, the procedural and extrajudicial documentation highlights the close relationship between early religious discipline, the confessionalization of civil society⁵, made even more urgent from the beginning by the presence of medieval heresies, and the rise of the “Satanist threat”, consequent to the re-evangelization of the highlands carried out by the medical orders, first and foremost by the Dominicans of San Giovanni Pedemonte.

The concern for the tenacious rooting of superstitious beliefs and practices in the diocese was also shared in the late Middle Ages by the diocesan ordinaries; from this point of view, the attention paid by Gerardo Landriani (1437–1445) during the pastoral visit made between 1444 and 1445 is very significant, in verifying the presence between the faithful of “incantatores” and “mulieres sortilege vel divinatrices”⁶. The questionnaires of the visit show a picture that is probably sweetened of moral conduct and religious discipline in the territories of Valtellina, Val Chiavenna, and the parish churches of the lake. Nevertheless, some testimonies reveal a very problematic condition from the point of view of doctrine and orthopraxis, of the religious customs of the local populations, and of the priests to whom their spiritual guide was entrusted, on paper⁷.

After the meticulous investigation carried out by Landriani and the clear censure expressed by Bishop Antonio Trivulzio during his visit to Chiavenna (1490) against those priests who were intrigued by “incantationibus, maleficiis, divinationibus et sortilegiis” (Scaramellini 1977), between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the attention to the presence among the faithful of heterodox beliefs, and above all to the threat represented by the worshippers of Satan, seems to be gradually vanishing from the horizon of the pastoral commitment of diocesan ordinaries, apart from a few exceptions.

Some hints of the superstitions widespread among the faithful of the diocese still emerge from the pastoral visit carried out in 1569 by Bishop Francesco Bonomi. From it we learn of the prohibitions with which the use of statues, images, rings with unknown characters for the care of the sick was censured, as well as of the condemnation of “Poisonings, spells, witchcraft, and bindings with some strange observance and unknown remedies”, and again of the prohibition of “o treat wounds with certain words or a specific number of prayers, and with linens or anything not approved by a physician; the gathering of ferns, seeds, or other herbs, or bushes on a specific day or night with the belief that if gathered at

another time or under different conditions, they would be devoid of effect”⁸. Bonomi then reiterated his desire to punish magicians and soothsayers with severity, and with greater harshness the sorcerers and witches who, according to the bishop, lived “in the mountainous parts of the dioceses”, responsible for their evil arts, obtained by making a pact with Satan, for the death of children and for “hail and sterility”⁹. However, for the bishop, Maurizio Monti pointed out, what aroused the greatest concern was the spread of heresy, which he intended to oppose by every means and to which a very severe decree issued in that same year bears witness¹⁰. The apprehension about the spread of superstitions and the presence of witches among the faithful emerged again, a century later, in July 1675, during the pastoral visit of Giovanni Ambrogio Torriani. On that occasion, the bishop complained to the parish priest of Furva about the spiritual degradation in which his community was living, described as a den of witches and sorcerers, in which from an early age men and women gave themselves to the most varied spells¹¹. Apart from these sporadic references, diocesan sources reveal themselves to be increasingly stingy with information on superstitions and diabolical witchcraft, a singular documentary silence destined to increase during the seventeenth century, in contrast with the rest of the peninsula¹².

That the question of superstitions appears marginal in the project of the Catholic reconquest of the valleys is in itself a noteworthy question, especially if we look at the results obtained by the Larian Church in the reform of religious customs and in the discipline of the clergy in the city of Como (Xeres 2006). It is astonishing that between the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century, a clear anti-magical commitment does not emerge in pastoral practice, and above all the downsizing of that *secta strigiarum*¹³, which for centuries had represented one of the main concerns of the Inquisition, is striking.

An anomaly that is surprising not only because of its proximity to the Ambrosian diocese, where the anti-superstitious and anti-witchcraft zeal of Charles Borromeo, and later, to a lesser extent, of his cousin Frederick¹⁴, was “exemplary”, but above all because of the long duration in the valleys of that climate of strigaphobic alarmism, fueled in previous decades by Dominican inquisitors and preachers, is that during the seventeenth century, he was responsible for the persecutions promoted by the secular courts (Mazzali 1988).

An interesting indication in this sense, pending a more in-depth research in the episcopal documentation, comes from the Appellationes collection of the ancient patriarchal archives of Aquileia (ACAU). The envelope signed IG-vol.VII contains acts of various kinds concerning 14 trials (10 civil and 4 criminal) instructed in the first instance before the episcopal court of Como, and judged on appeal before the Vicar General of the Patriarchate of Aquileia, at the patriarchal palace of Udine, in a period of time between 1630 and 1737. Ten of these judicial proceedings were celebrated during the long episcopate of Lazzaro Carafino (1626–1665), who, in the wake of the reforming prelates of the first post-Tridentine phase (Antonio Volpi, Feliciano Ninguarda, Filippo Archinti), embodied in an exemplary way the Counter-Reformation bishop, “enterprising and demanding”. Carafino was actively involved in reforming the church and the society of Lake Como: he made a thorough pastoral visit, celebrated two diocesan synods, provided for the formation of the clergy by establishing seminaries, and issued numerous decrees for the formation and discipline of religious and laity, helping to draw “the true religious image of Valtellina”.

Unlike what happened elsewhere in the peninsula¹⁵, the interventions of the diocesan tribunal are noted; however, “only” for the censure of a parish priest with a scandalous way of life, which circulates brazenly in the city; of a religious who advocates the autonomy of his church from the local parish priest; of a municipal commissioner guilty of having assaulted one of his political opponents in church; of a villain banished three times from Milan, who wanders around the diocese dressed as a priest¹⁶.

Absent from the moralizing horizon of Bishop Carafino, they seem instead to be healers, sorcerers, superstitious, and above all alleged witches who in other Italian dioceses had also been one of various reasons for the attention on the part of the episcopal courts and in contrast with the courts of the Inquisition, after its reform¹⁷. It cannot fail to be surprising, from the perspective of a “moralization of the sacred”, which also extended

the city model of Christianity to rural and peripheral environments, that the absence, even before a precise anti-superstitious (not to say anti-diabolical witchcraft) commitment, even of simple information that can be deduced, for example, from pastoral visits, regarding the customs and beliefs of the “rough and ignorant” inhabitants of the valley¹⁸. It is all the more surprising if one considers the ambitious project that the Larian bishops intended to implement, a vast and widespread corrective enterprise aimed at achieving an “efficient and potentially total control” of the valley communities, and at an increasing coincidence between “civil coexistence and ecclesiastical structures”¹⁹.

In this controlled society, in which particular attention was paid to the systematic surveillance of those who could influence the knowledge and convictions of the communities, from teachers to midwives, through acrobats, innkeepers, and exorcists, it is rather strange that there is no precise indication from the documentary sources to monitor the existence, for example, of signers, non-ecclesiastical sorcerers, and exorcists, whose activities, although sporadically, are instead attested by local informants at the end of the seventeenth century, probably the same ones who were victims of the ferocious hunts conducted by the secular courts during this time²⁰. It is surprising, finally, that among “savage” peoples, entrusted to an ignorant clergy, devoid of doctrine and good morals, the Larian Church, in an attempt to revive the faith and regenerate devotion, failed to conduct thorough investigations into false beliefs and dubious practices, following the example of the Borromean inquiries²¹. These are all aspects that still need to be clarified, to which only more in-depth investigations, even in the rich repertoire of pastoral visits, will be able to provide adequate answers.

What is certain is that unlike the Mesolcina Valley, where Protestantism failed to take root despite the arrival of two preachers both from Locarno, active for about twenty years (1550–1570), and a second attempt at proselytism, also unsuccessful, at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Marcacci 2017). In the Adda and Mera valleys there was vice versa, in the second half of the sixteenth century, with respect to the establishment of small but well-organized communities of Italian reformers who were able to live undisturbed without suffering particular pressure until 1620²².

The relationship with the Italian-speaking Protestant world, in direct contact with the Catholic majority of the valley communities, posed a real threat to the Larian Church on the purely confessional level²³, and especially on the slippery terrain of suspicious devotions. Significant is the case of Giulia Maria dell’Avo, known as Ursula, an inhabitant of Cedrasco, imprisoned for witchcraft in 1672, but also for having confessed to having received directly from St. Teresa an ointment to heal the sick, to know how to predict healings and deaths, to be able to intercede to guarantee the entry into Purgatory of sinful souls, for confessing to having had ecstasies in which Jesus appeared to her scourged, and finally that she knew how to remove curses. Because of these superstitious statements, the bishop had instructed the provost of Ponte, Don Defendente, to carry out the appropriate investigations.

The bishop, on 27 May 1672, in reminding the prelate to take all the most minute information about the woman, in order to discover “an spiritus a Deo vel a daemone sit”, emphasized the seriousness “in these parts in the face of the Protestants”, because dangerous consequences would have arisen from this scandalous woman, including the “rise some new sect”. More than witchcraft, for the bishop the main concern was that the woman could create a retinue of acolytes, resulting in a new heresy, all under the eyes of the Protestants²⁴. If the conservatism characteristic of rural environments and valley communities certainly represented one of the main problems of the local church, which had to deal with the shortcomings originating from decades of laxity (from the interference of the laity in religious life, to suspicious devotions, passing through the mixture of the sacred Catholic and animistic magical legacies)²⁵, there is also no doubt that pastoral activity was mainly absorbed by the constant concern for countering the menacing Protestant presence²⁶, which, although unable to take root outside the small urban centers, had nevertheless managed to penetrate the highlands and rural areas²⁷.

It is in this context that the Larian bishops, protagonists of the new ecclesial season, had to develop peculiar strategies for the consolidation of the faith, which, taking into account the environmental difficulties, due to the very *durissimae cervicis* of their parishioners, nevertheless established an insurmountable limit in the correction of the “religion of the simple”, marking a clear boundary that separated their action of reform of religious customs from Protestant theses (Prosperi 1981). The low profile assumed by the Larian bishops in dealing with the issue of superstitions was most likely also a consequence of the strong identity drive that distinguished the belonging of the valley communities to Catholicism. In other words, it was probably dictated by the need to safeguard orthopraxis even at the cost of preserving particular popular devotional forms, instead of moving in the direction of their drastic reduction, pursuing the Reformed on the terrain of “purification of faith”²⁸. In this sense, the main reason for the discontinuity between the model of renewal implemented in the diocese of Como and the project of regeneration of Christian society conceived by Cardinal Borromeo, who identified the search for and consequent eradication of false devotions and folkloric superstitions as one of the main battles for religious renewal, can be discerned. It is at the same time the best way to subtract arguments from Reformed propaganda, from the rear, and not like the bishops of Como on the front line confronting the “Lutheran” enemy.

It is most likely in this “geographical” peculiarity that lies one of the main reasons for the difference between the pastoral action of the post-Tridentine bishops of Como and the anti-superstitious and anti-witchcraft zeal shown by Borromeo in his work of renewal²⁹. Although it shared the same desire for reform, the Larian episcopate could not go further in the reform of religious customs, especially in the fight against superstitions, and in the application of its corollary (the witch hunt), for reasons of a political nature (the limits imposed by the Grisons on the Como Church in the Adda and Mera Valleys), and above all religious, the presence of an Italian-speaking Protestant community, authorized and protected by Chur, unlike the Mesolcina community that had been reduced to silence and forced to emigrate.

In this very particular situation, it is understandable that the Larian bishops were not only unable but probably had no intention of starting an investigation similar to the Ambrosian Index variarum superstitionum of 1576. The absence of initiatives aimed at monitoring the spread of superstitions on the Milanese model, in addition to the limits imposed by Chur, probably also originated from the awareness of the dangerous consequences of such investigations, which would necessarily have exposed the Catholic Church to the criticism of the Reformed, and at the same time placed on the local clergy the burdensome and risky task of separating the wheat from the chaff in distinguishing “popular piety” superstition from correct devotion. This was an arduous and extremely slippery task, not only because of the poor preparation of the priests³⁰, but because of the “opaque” indications themselves from the Council of Trent, during whose sessions the Council Fathers had failed to establish a clear boundary between what is licit and what is forbidden in Catholic devotion.

If not even the conciliar authorities had been able to define precisely the meaning of superstition, leaving uncertain the distinction between popular piety and vain observance³¹, then this task could not have been at the top of the concerns of the bishops of a frontier diocese³², grappling with “heretics”³³ who with impunity, in the taverns, they insulted “the cardinals and all other prelates who lives in Rome”, accusing them of giving themselves “freely” to the sin of “dishonesty”, and who also had the audacity to offend the “Supreme Pontiff master of gallantries and love sonnets”, accusing him of being a “Sorcerer.”³⁴

3. Conclusions

Committed to confronting the Protestant presence, small but well organized and doctrinally prepared, active in the valleys as no other region of the peninsula, and protected by the authorities, it is conceivable to believe that the main preoccupation for the local church in the seventeenth century was no longer diabolical superstitions, and consequently

not even witches³⁵, just as it is plausible to believe the desire on the part of the Larian episcopate not to feed excessive interest into the theme of superstitions, a necessity dictated by the need not to expose Catholicism to the criticism of Protestant propaganda³⁶.

On the other hand, the “sudden” abandonment by the Larian bishops³⁷ of the fight against superstitions, in the Borromean sense, gave rise to a painful and lasting “misunderstanding” with the Catholic valley communities. Although docile in accepting the will of their church, they also proved refractory, if not downright hostile, in carrying out episcopal and inquisitorial directives in matters of diabolical witchcraft. This was at the origin, during the seventeenth century, of misunderstandings that often resulted in very harsh contrasts, culminating in some cases with the blatant disavowal of the Catholic authorities (bishops and inquisitors), in the name of the defense of their juridical autonomy, and of an anti-witchcraft tradition that the secular courts did not intend to renounce³⁸.

In particular, in the County of Bormio at the turn of the thirties and seventies of the sixteenth century, in relation to significant persecutions of alleged witches, there were some of the most significant episodes of the opposition of the local magistrates to the new directives given by Rome on the subject of diabolical witchcraft. The prohibition imposed by the Capitulate of Milan on the presence of the Holy Office in the valleys of the Mera and Adda rivers had in fact delegated to the Larian bishops to supervise the trials for the crime of maleficium, thorny judicial cases, here more than elsewhere in the peninsula³⁹, precisely because of their nature as a *crimina mixta fori*. The diocesan ordinaries, faced with the resourcefulness, celerity, and harshness of the secular magistracies, were not slow to adopt the “instrument” of the *monitorio*, which they used on several occasions to reaffirm the authority of the tribunal of faith over the secular forum. Episcopal authority was reaffirmed (and defense) by resorting, on the one hand, to the peremptory warning towards those judges who were increasingly engaging in incorrect behavior, in contravention of doctrine and canon law, and on the other, by issuing, similarly to the tribunal of the Inquisition of San Giovanni Pedemonte, “licenses” of good conduct to the alleged witches, so as to protect them from present and future actions by the local magistrates⁴⁰.

Although episcopal moderation succeeded both in the trials of the thirties and in the subsequent decades, at the turn of the fifties and seventies, in saving human lives, it was not able to save other victims of the Bormine hunts, who were quickly executed on the orders of judges jealous of their prerogatives and worried about the inexplicable delays and requests for guarantees by the bishops of Como. The latter were accused on more than one occasion, as was the case with the inquisitor of Como from a crucifix in Lugano in 1630, of culpably delaying the punishment of women (predominantly) manifestly witches such as “li Giudei al Cappello”⁴¹. In this sense, the Catholic judges of the Mera and Adda valleys showed no hesitation in having recourse to the same Protestant authorities of Chur, who were also accused in other ways of harassing Catholics, in order to obtain support and protection in disputes with the episcopal court. Emblematic of the criticality of the relations between secular authorities and diocesan ordinaries, is the remonstrance of the podestà of Bormio addressed to the Council of the *Praiseworthy Leagues* in 1675, in which he complained about the warning received from Bishop Torriani inviting him, under the threat of excommunication, to desist from wanting to continue proceeding against some suspicions of witchcraft. An “unfair” conduct inadmissible in his eyes that contrasted “with the Lord God, with the sovereignty of the Leagues, with the freedom of the subjects and with the correct administration of justice” and which allowed evil to “to take root and find protection”⁴².

This was a heartfelt denunciation, indicative of a substantial sharing of views, at least on this issue, between Protestants and Catholics, otherwise fierce opponents as evidenced by the terrible events that bloodied the valleys during the Thirty Years’ War.

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Notes

- ¹ The diocese was divided into twenty-nine wards: Fino, Uggiate, Balerna, Riva San Vitale, Lugano, Agno, Bellinzona, Locarno, Cuvio, Nesso, Intelvi, Isola, Lenno, Bellagio, Mandello, Menaggio, Dongo, Gravedona, Olonio, Salmolaco, Chiavenna, Ardenno, Berbenno, Sondrio, Tresivio, Villa, Poschiavo, Mazzo, and Bormio, cfr. (Portone 2010; Troccoli-Chini and Lienhard 1989; Ostinelli 2024).
- ² In medieval times, the San Bernardino was the only direct route, not only military, to Chur. In the early seventeenth century, the so-called Valtellina corridor, which connected the territories subject to the Habsburgs of Spain with the domains of the Habsburgs of Austria, would become vital for Spain. The route started from Milan, and continuing via Lake Como and the Valtellina, reached Holland, passing through Lake Constance, the upper reaches of the Rhine, the Rhineland, Alsace, and Strasbourg, cfr. (Anselmi 2000; Hitza 2024).
- ³ Grigioni, *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, cit.
- ⁴ «The diocese of Como [Bishop Archinti] reported, obeys three different lords over time, that is, the Catholic King, the Swiss, The Raeti or Grisons, and therefore of all in Italy it is the most difficult to be governed», Maurizio Monti, *Storia di Como*, vol. II, C. Pietro Ostinelli, Como 1831, cit., p. 287.
- ⁵ By confessionalization we mean to refer to that process of disciplining not only the clergy but the entire society, as it has been described by Roberto Bizzocchi, that is, of a «process of insertion of the constituted powers, civil and ecclesiastical, right into the most minute, everyday and intimate aspects of life», (Bizzocchi 1995).
- ⁶ Among other superstitions reported in the responses, of great importance is the one in which news of ludus is given: «Interrogatus si in cura sua sibi commissa sunt aliqui excommunicati, heretici vel malefici, respondet quod bene sunt aliquae mulieres suspecte de maleficiis seu iochro herodiadis, alios nescit». Rare “ethnographic” evidence attesting to the presence in this area of the peninsula of a specific tradition, the Game of the Lady, otherwise referred to as Herodias. The detection of this belief, on the other hand, represents an important confirmation of the spread in the diocesan territory of that same tradition that was surfacing, in the same time frame, in the trials instructed by the Dominican Inquisition in Valtellina, cfr. (Canobbio 2001). In the Chiavenna countryside, the inquisitor Ubertino da Vercelli had in 1432 brought several people to trial on charges of witchcraft, including a woman named Bira, suspected of having gone «in bonam sotietatem», cfr. (Giorgetta 2007). In the same year, in Thusis (Tosanna), Diocese of Chur, several women accused of witchcraft had been burned at the stake and others banished by the local court against the advice of the bishop, A.M.Z., *Lo sterminio delle streghe nella valle poschiavina, Notizie raccolte negli anni 1880–1890 da Gaudenzio Olgiati giudice federale a Losanna (1832–1892)*, «Quaderni grigionitaliani», 24 (1954–1955), pp. 30–45, in particular p. 37. Six years later, in 1438, in Morbegno, the inquisitor Cristoforo da Luino again instructed trials against a number of people accused of curses, divination and «conversationis bone societatus». A focus on diabolical society destined to last over time, as confirmed by the condemnation handed down in 1450, also in Morbegno, by Luca da Lecco, vicar of the inquisitor Agostino da Novara, against two women accused of heresy for having participated in meetings with the domina ludi (by then identified with the devil) and paying homage to her for a long time, Giorgetta, *Inquisitori e giudici laici*, cit., pp. 120–21.
- ⁷ Nicolaitic practices must have been so deeply rooted in the Larian clergy, to the point of considering the union in marriage of the priest with his own concubine to be at all licit: «Interrogatus si habet concubinam, et si canonici aut capelani aut hanbitantes ibi habent concubinam, respondet quod presbiter Antonius tenet unam concubinam, nomine Malgaritam satis iuvenem; dicitur etiam quod presbiter Cosmas usus fuit cum matre et filia, tam nescit nisi ex auditu, et quod presbiter Iohannes de Trevano canonicus dicte ecclesie etiam duxit unam feminam in Valtelinam», cfr. Elisabetta Canobbio, *La visita pastorale di Gerardo Landriani alla Diocesi di Como, 1444–1445*, cit., p. 118.
- ⁸ Monti, *Storia di Como*, vol.II, cit., p. 265.
- ⁹ Ibidem.
- ¹⁰ Ivi, p. 266
- ¹¹ Ivi, p. 95. (Farinelli 1989).
- ¹² «It was precisely diabolical magic and witchcraft that became, during the 1570s [16th century, ed.], and even more so in the following decades, the main focus of the tribunals of the Holy Office in Italy, Giovanni Romeo, *L’Inquisizione nell’Italia moderna*, Editori Laterza, Bari 2006, p. 37.
- ¹³ *Como*, *Dizionario Storico dell’Inquisizione*, cit., vol.I, pp. 355–57.
- ¹⁴ Portone (1996); Farinelli-Paccagnini, *Processo per stregoneria*, cit, pp. 85–88; (Prosperi 1996; de Boer 2004).
- ¹⁵ Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, cit., pp. 368–99. «While prosecuting Protestants dominated the activity of the Holy Office for most of the 16th century with 80 percent of cases in Venice and 75 percent in Friuli; an impressive turnaround occurred toward the end of the century. Data on illicit magic increased to over 40% of all activity, not only in the northern parts of the peninsula, but also in the south, in Naples. This trend continued throughout the 17th century until the early 1700s, when magic cases

reached a total close to 70 percent of all activity ell the Venetian Inquisition, by 60 percent of that in Naples», William Monter, *Riti, mitologia e magia in Europa all'inizio dell'età moderna*, Universale Paperbacks, Il Mulino, Bologna 1988.

- 16 Gian Carlo Menis, «*Appellationes comenses ad sanctam sedem patriarchalem Aquileiensem metropolitanam*» nei secoli XVII e XVIII, in *Como e Aquileia. Per una storia della società comasca (612–1751)*. Atti del Convegno (Como 15–17 ottobre 1987), Raccolta Storica vol. XIX, Società Storica Comense, Como 1991, pp. 103–116, in particular pp. 103–106.
- 17 Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, cit. p. 368 e sgg.
- 18 «In the documentation examined, only rarely do we come across the attestation of religious manifestations that might suggest a persistent substratum of pagan rituals», Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., p. 165.
- 19 Ivi, pp. 53 e 59. Undoubtedly, the reticence on the subject of witchcraft could derive, as Agnoletto observed about the Borromeo Index superstitionum (1576), from the informants' desire to avoid any reference to Satanism, so as to ward off suspicion about the presence of demonolatry in their parishes, cfr. Attilio Agnoletto, *Un "Indice di superstizioni" della Lombardia Borromea*, «*Quaderni milanesi. Studi e fonti di storia lombarda*», a. 4, n. 8 (1984), pp. 77–94, in particular pp. 91–92. Nevertheless, in the Ambrosian inquiry, there is still talk of witches, specifically in Mena, parish of Angera, and in Leventina, where it is reported that: «He still has a reputation for many witches, which, however, are not proven», ivi, p. 91. Significantly, this last report was followed in 1583 by the celebrated hunt unleashed by Borromeo during his pastoral visit to the valley. On the other hand, the silence of the Larian diocesan sources did not only concern Como, but for different reasons, also affected other dioceses. Corrain and Zampini write about Abruzzo: «the region is extremely rich in folk traditions» ciò nonostante «we are faced with survey material of disappointing poverty», Cleto Corrain, Pierluigi Zampini, *Documenti etnografici e folkloristici nei sinodi diocesani dell'Italia meridionale (Abruzzo, Campania, Beneventano, Lucania, Palermitano, Puglia, Calabria)*, estratto da «*Palestra del Clero*», nn.3,4,5 (1966), p. 2. Like a karst river, the conspicuous traditional legacy begins to surface in the late 17th century, for example in the Trivento diocesan synod of 1688. It is a reticence that initially emerges in other southern synods as well, but is destined at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to give way to more detailed descriptions of popular errors and increasingly severe censures to correct the bad habits of the faithful by diocesan ordinaries, *ibid.* In Como, on the contrary, the silence of the ecclesiastical staff continued thereafter, probably originating from other reasons than those shared with the southern clergy to avoid providing an unedifying image of the local church, ivi pp. 74–75.
- 20 Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., p. 166. Significant is what Adriano Prospero writes about the action of the ecclesiastical authorities in Tuscany, in an area that was not the scene of significant witch hunts in the modern age, but where there was also a massive moralization of religious customs, which implied special attention to the world of folk magic, and its practitioners: «In the same direction [of the fight against dubious devotions] was the long work needed to drive back the mediation offered by witches and healers into a sphere not allowed to good believers: the Lucchese witch Crezia Mariani had claimed to possess a healing power but to use it for good. "I heal children when they are handled by the dead and by witches" had declared to his judges in 1589. Such statements are no longer found so explicitly in the seventeenth century trials we have seen». (Prosperi 1989).
- 21 And not only that: consider, for example, the edict promulgated on 14 December 1573, after a pastoral visitation, by the bishop of Chioggia, the Veronese Girolamo Negri, in which the confessors of the city and diocese were required to question penitents about their prayers, devotions and readings. «Anything that smacked of superstition was to be handed over to the Curia» Prospero writes, which adds: «The bishop hoped that the evil plant of 'superstitio' would thus give way to the vigorous branches of true religion». Of course, the "messe" was plentiful «making a record of a great number of ejaculators, prayers and ditties - of the same kind and sometimes the same ones that in the meantime were being collected by the Holy Office and that more and more were to be collected in the files of the inquisitorial tribunals», Prospero, *Tribunali della coscienza*, cit., p. 372.
- 22 In the Mesolcina Valley, attempts to spread the Reformation were thwarted by the joint action of the bishop of Milan, on whom he depended in the spiritual, by the Catholic cantons that ruled Bellinzona, who feared that the proximity of Protestant preachers might influence their subjects, by the Mesolcinese community with a Catholic majority, by the Grisons lords who also were forced to respect local autonomy, and finally, in the seventeenth century, by the Spanish governors who went so far as to threaten Grisons with a ban on the import of goods from the Duchy of Milan, cfr. Marcacci, *La Riforma protestante in Mesolcina e Calanca*, cit., in particular pp. 71–73.
- 23 This constant concern can be seen in the attention paid by bishops during pastoral visits in systematically monitoring the Protestant presence in the valleys subject to the Three Leagues, cfr. Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., p. 61.
- 24 On the trial of Giulia Maria dell'Avo, known as Orsolina di Cedrasco, see: Giuseppe Romegialli, *Storia della Valtellina e delle già contee di Bormio e Chiavenna*, vol. II, *Coi tipi di Giov. Batta Della Cagnoletta, Sondrio*, 1834, p. 160; Antonio Maffei, *Cose che dovrebbero tenersi incredibili se non fossero indebitamente vere*, in «*La Valtellina*», n. 10–17-24 settembre, 1875; Vittorio Spinetti, *Le streghe in Valtellina: studio su vari documenti editi ed inediti dei secc. XV- XVI- XVII- XVIII*, rist. anast. dell'ed. di Sondrio 1903, Arnaldo Forni, Bologna 1988, pp. 75–78; Massimo Prevideprato, *La donna senza volto*, Labos, Morbegno, 2006, pp. 273–76; *idem*, *Con nostro grande disgusto. Contrasti politici in Valtellina e nelle Leghe Grigie dal 1640 al 1700*, «*Bollettino della Società Storica Valtellinese*», n. 52, 1999, p. 157. According to Prevideprato, contrary to past claims by some local historians, who reported the woman's condemnation to burning at the stake, it is not possible to trace how Defendant's investigation ended or even the outcome of the witchcraft trial instructed by Governor.

25 Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., p. 61.

26 Although Valtellina appeared, since the early 1630s, to use the expressions of Bishop Carafino: «freed by the benevolence of the supreme God from the Calvinist heresy, restored to primitive freedom and snatched from the jaws of the devil », continued to cause great apprehension in the Larian Church about the «residues» and «consequences» of the Protestant presence that had affected the Adda and Mera valleys, «albeit in a limited way ». Although the Capitolato di Milano, stipulated in 1639 between Spain and the Three Leagues, had established that in Valtellina, Chiavenna, and Bormio, only the Catholic religion was allowed as legitimate, prohibiting the residence there of people belonging to other denominations; except for a limited annual period, in the Italian-speaking Catholic territories subject to the Grisons, a certain number of Protestants still appeared, especially in Valchiavenna. The three hundred or so «heretics», distributed between the upper tertiere of Valtellina (corresponding to the parishes of Mazzo, Villa, and Teglio) and Valchiavenna, while not creating «difficulty or scandal », constituted, as the repetition of cries and appeals show, a cause for alarm (sometimes motivated by political expediency) and a threat in itself, because they were considered dangerous because of the risk of contagion that their presence (considered on par with a «plague» or “gangrene” for the church) in any case entailed, «also taken in small doses ». In the face of heretical contagion, the first and principal task of the ecclesiastical authorities was to maintain a strict separation between Catholics and Protestants, to prevent the latter from entering Catholic churches, and to constantly monitor their presence and movements, Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., pp. 69–74.

27 Ivi, p. 61

28 In this perspective, Xeres’ final considerations on the religious life of the valley communities take on a particular significance. From the picture that emerges from the pastoral visits, the scholar writes, we are confronted: «religious attitudes and behaviors that are certainly placed within the framework of the traditional Christian patrimony of faith and worship, nevertheless they are adapted to a natural religious sensibility, in a sort of ‘appropriation’, precisely, of Christian contents and symbols by the local populations, in which the most doctrinally or disciplinarily correct elements do not always end up prevailing». Xeres, «*Popoli pieghevoli alla buona disciplina*», cit., p. 111.

29 Regarding Borromeo’s zealous anti-superstitious efforts, Wietse de Boer writes: “[he] considered the eradication of magical and superstitious practices as one of his main tasks, greatly expanding the scope of application of the Tridentine dictates on the subject and carrying out strategies of accusation that went far beyond those of his colleagues and the inquisitors of other regions of Italy. He did so in clear competition with the Inquisition of Milan and sometimes even with the Roman Inquisition, as was clear in a well-known case of 1569–70, in which the Holy Office blocked the execution of a group of witches sentenced to death at the request of the archbishop”, de Boer, *La conquista dell’anima*, cit., p. 293. From de Boer’s research emerge significant confirmations of what decades earlier, without being able to dispose of current studies, Ernesto De Martino had argued in *South and Magic*: «In the age of the Renaissance and the Reformation, low magic is hunted down, dragged into the courts, judged and condemned in both the Catholic and Protestant worlds, and although judgment and condemnation are based here on fanatical persuasion, On the part of the judges, of the reality of the tacit and expressed pact with the devil, it is certain that even in this roundabout way a memorable battle was fought against ceremonial magic and witchcraft, a battle that mobilized all the repressive forces of the ecclesiastical and secular tribunals» Ernesto De Martino, *Sud e magia*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1983, p. 98.

30 Borromeo himself, in an edict of 7 September 1576, which forbade «*Bollettini, Anelli et simili cose per la peste*», if, on the one hand, he did not allow the relics to be touched, recommending prudence towards images, vows and oblations, and on the other hand, he established that the «*immagine quoque sacre sculptae*», if they are removed («*si deformatae sint*»), were buried either under the floor of the church or in the cemetery, Agnoletto, *Un “Indice di superstizioni”*, cit., p. 87.

31 «What borders?» asked Attilio Agnoletto years ago in his valuable contribution on Carlo Borromeo’s *Index variarum superstitionum*. In fact, according to the historian, although the Fifth Lateran Council (1514) had a clear position against all forms of demonolatry and superstition, juxtaposing their condemnation in the ninth session with that of heresy. It nevertheless did not say what exactly the “superstitions” consisted of, not providing a criterion for distinguishing between “pietas” and “superstitio”. Likewise, he added: «Session XXV of Trent does not offer us any persuasive ideas for a current reading. On the one hand, the cult of saints and relics is tenaciously defended [. . .]; sacred images are defended, even those that “osculamur et coram quibus caput aperimus et procumbimus”; on the other hand, it condemns “omnibus superstitio in sanctorum invocazione, reliquiarum veneratium et imaginum sacro usu». Agnoletto, *Un “Indice di superstizioni”*, cit., pp. 84–85. With regard to the blurred boundary between licit and permitted in post-Tridentine Catholicism, Prosperi writes: «With the beginning of the Protestant Reformation and the spread of the doctrines of the so-called ‘sacramental heretics’ (followers of the ideas of Zwingli and Calvin) and of Anabaptist and iconoclastic tendencies, distrust increased, and the interventions of the Inquisition thickened wherever the suspicion of tendencies denying the sacredness of things peeped out, words and people who were accepted as such by the Catholic Church. With the age of the Council of Trent, in reaction to the positions of the Protestant Reformation, there was a tendency to encourage devotion to saints, relics, blessed medals and other vehicles of the sacred, forms of religiosity that appeared superstitious and stingy in the eyes of more rigorous theologians. But in the face of the dangers to the unity of the church deriving from the combined effects of the rational criticism of miracles proposed by Piero Pomponazzi and the rejection by the Protestant reformers of the automatic efficacy (ex opere operato) of the sacraments even if not accompanied by faith, the choice made by the Council of Trent and the ecclesiastical authorities was clear. The Inquisition, for its part, followed the strategy of striking hard at every trace of intellectual doubt, while treating superstitious practices with great mildness». Adriano Prosperi,

Abuso di sacramenti e sacramentali, Dizionario Storico dell'Inquisizione, vol. I, cit., pp. 16–18, in particular pp. 16–17. On the same topic, see for a general overview, Michaela Valente, *Superstitione, heresia e ignoranza. Teoria e prassi inquisitoriale in alcuni casi di maleficia*, Prescritto e proscritto. *Religione e società nell'Italia moderna (secc. XVI-XIX)*, by Andrea Cicerchia, Guido Dall'Olio, Matteo Duni, Carocci editore, 2015, pp. 65–84.

32 «But who determines what is inordinatum, profanum, inhonestum? If it is the bishop and with him the councils he convokes, then the opinion of the Authority seems decisive», Agnoletto, *Un "Indice di superstizioni"*, cit., p. 85.

33 And that is not all: in a letter sent to the Inquisitor of Como by his vicar in Morbegno, Lattanzio Guarinoni, of 24 April 1658, we learn that in Valtellina «endless forbidden books» and also that some «gentlewomen » teach «exorbitant things », «posing as theologians » and that with their speeches «they fasten simple women», gaining a large following, Gianvittorio Signorotto, *Il quietismo nella diocesi di Como, Como e Aquileia*, cit., pp. 239–56, in particolare p. 248.

34 Paolo Portone, *Alcuni documenti inediti del Sant'Uffizio sulla caccia alle streghe nell'antica diocesi di Como durante il XVII secolo*. Atti del convegno-Streghe, *diavoli e sibille* (Como 18–19 maggio 2001), Nodo libri, Como 2003, pp. 75–87, in particular p. 87.

35 Taking into account that, according to the most reliable estimates, the population settled in the Adda and Mera Valleys between the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century did not exceed eighty thousand units, the Protestant presence from a purely quantitative point of view was very small and moreover territorially circumscribed, see Gennaro Tallini, «*Quel popolo hora tuto catholico*». *Nuovi dati sulla Valtellina tra Cinquecento e Seicento: anime, fuochi e paradigmi di compatibilità*, «Nuova rivista Storica», XCVIII, aprile 2014, fasc. I, pp. 321–74. In fact, it is estimated that before the Sacred Slaughter (1620) the number of Reformed in the Italian-speaking valleys was just over a thousand. The consequences of the massacres perpetrated by the Catholics led by Giacomo Robustelli against the heterodox communities were terrible, since 48.94% of the reformed population (1089) had to abandon everything, 28.55% were killed, and only 245 (22.49%) were those who remained in the valleys or who temporarily took refuge across the border and then returned much later, to the places of origin, *ivi*, p. 343. Despite such a small presence, the Protestants continued to represent a constant source of apprehension for the ecclesiastical authorities and a reason for resentment for the Catholic rioters. Tallini tried to explain the reasons for this amplified perception of the Protestant danger with valid arguments. In his opinion, what caused concern in the Como Church was the high organizational level of the Protestant Church and the remarkable degree of doctrinal preparation of its pastors, who among other things were much greater in number than Catholic priests, the latter poorly educated and of reprehensible conduct. In addition, what aroused the resentment of the Catholics was the social status of the Reformed families, which with their network of political influences, and partly also because of their relations with the Three Leagues, risked altering the socio-economic balance in the valleys, to the detriment of the consolidated privileges of the old aristocracies.

36 In the pastoral action of the Larian Church, what Monti wrote would seem to find confirmation: «The heresy of Martin Luther [...] wonderfully enlarged it partly made the witches forgotten.» Monti, *Storia di Como*, cit., vol. II, p. 95. On the controversial anti-superstitious commitment of the Italian episcopate in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, see the stimulating observations of Adriano Prosperi, who if on the one hand highlights the interest of numerous post-Tridentine bishops in monitoring the presence and spread of “superstitious practices”, a preparatory survey for the purification of the devotion of the faithful, on the other hand underlines the strong limits and contradictions that characterized the work of reform of morals begun between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: [...] The solidarity of the parish clergy with the local culture was profound, but the offering of the sacred official, while competing with the sacred proscribed, had similarities and substantial relationships with the latter. From the bishop to the witch, the religious field of the age of the Counter-Reformation appears as an integrated field, where internal rivalries do not hide filiations and similarities. Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, cit., p. 377.

37 In the letter sent by the canon of Chiavenna Giovanni Schiavetto to the Congregation of the Holy Office, he also referred to a woman «who used to ordinarily dispute matters of faith with Catholics», and to the case, in his opinion of unprecedented gravity, of Marta Fiache, who went to visit a sick person and refused to drink holy water brought by a Catholic lady «as if it superstitious water », Archivio del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede (ADDF), St. St. 7-b, *Lettera di Giovanni Schiavetto*.

38 There is reason to believe that the resistance to the new course did not come only from the outside, but that even within the Larian Inquisition the transition to a guarantor line most likely had to deal with a *modus operandi* inspired by the repressive zeal of the previous century. A clue to this could come from a curious manuscript, quite rare for its literary form, now preserved in the Municipal Library of Como (Biblioteca Comunale di Como, ms.3.2.24), composed of several sheets bearing the words *Casi del Sant'Uffizio mandati al Signor Canonico Luigi Odescalco, come consultore*. Studied for the first time by Valeria Pigni and more recently by Anna Ronchetti, it has been hypothesized that it is a scheme for drawing up minutes, even in the matter of diabolical witchcraft (the others concern blasphemy and insult). Nothing is said about its authors, although it is conceivable that it comes from the convent of San Giovanni Pedemonte; although not very interesting from the point of view of the crimes charged to the witch referred to by the fictitious name of Berta, it is on the contrary important for the indications on the way to “fabbricare” the trial, somewhat discordant with the moderate directives now prevalent within the Congregation of the Holy Office. Several elements are in contrast with Rome, which reveals the existence of a *modus operandi* that is hard to die and still shared by influential elements of the local Inquisition court. Think, for example, of the emphasis with which the scheme is attributed to the collection of the informants in *tempore prefixo*, to the importance given during the interrogation to the bad reputation of the witch, as if the voices themselves confirmed the accusations, to the use of torture «con durezza», to the nonchalant intervention during the process of exorcists who were entrusted with the task of exorcising the cursed, with an obvious restriction of the

doctors' field of action; see Anna Ronchetti, *Frammenti di storia della stregoneria nel comasco (sec. XV-XVII)*, tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Milano, Anno Accademico 2007–2008, pp. 45–59, pp. 104–13.

³⁹ «He [Bishop Archinti] notes that the Bormies were not entirely subjects of the Grisons, but united to them by certain pacts, and they enjoyed many privileges; that the praetor sent to them by the Grisons could not give judgment in civil and criminal cases, unless he had heard the councillors of the place; but these counsellors were so rash that they dared to prosecute and condemn ecclesiastical persons, notwithstanding that they had the privilege of the forum», Monti, *Storia di Como*, cit., vol. II, pp. 288–89.

⁴⁰ *Alcuni documenti inediti del Sant'Uffizio sulla caccia alle streghe*, cit., pp. 75–87.

⁴¹ ADDF, St. St. L 7-b. 16 ottobre 1631, *Riva San Vitale*.

⁴² Archivio di Stato di Sondrio, Fondo Romegialli, 9 novembre 1675, transcription by Massimo Prevideprato: We would like to thank our sister Simona for her kind report.

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