

Local feasts



POGLIANO MILANESE: the Boja's village

All around the area North of Milan, our small town is popular as “The Boja’s village” and the inhabitants are treated with great respect and reverential fear.

Until few years ago, during the religious processions which usually took place on the occasion of the village festival, a little statue with the features of a devil with a cloak and horns used to be carried along the streets.

Let's try to understand the origins of this ancient tradition.

In our area the word “BOJA” has always meant “DEVIL”, demon or Satan. It's a way to mean “EVIL”.

In the past the “Boja” was the man who executed the sentences to death. In Milan, during the Sforza Family's dominion, the official “Boja” was a man who came from Pogliano and as it was usual at that time (and up to the beginning of the 20th century), people used to be named and identified with the name of their hometown. For this reason that “Boja” in Milan was called “Pujian” and since then the two words have become synonymous and our town became the “Paës del Boja” (Boja's village) for everyone. The inhabitants of Pogliano were not really happy about this nickname, so they tried to defend themselves from such a horrible fame. As a consequence of that, to exorcise the Devil, a little statue with the most horrible features was built and called “Boja” and it was carried along the streets of Pogliano during the religious processions, in particular in honour of St. Paul and Peter's Day in June.

This particular character was represented by a wooden sculpture made by an artist from Pogliano. The statue was carved at the beginning of the 20th century, but it was destroyed in a fire for unknown reasons. Someone thought to build up a new one, but this time in concrete and stone in order to avoid its destruction. It was a huge work: the Boja as tall as a man together with the “Bujet” (a little demon) which was placed at the Boja's feet, near a fireplace.

In the past the statue was shown around during the village feast and it was so successful that the news of a statue which defends from evil spread all around the villages nearby. The statue was also lent to other villages and it was even stolen.

Nowadays the Boja's statue is rarely shown during the village feast and it's no longer made of concrete.

