



**Disasters in Popular Cultures**

Giovanni Gugg, Elisabetta Dall'Ò, Domenica Borriello (Eds.)

**The Veil of Saint Agatha in Popular Narratives of Etna Risk**

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**Abstract**

Relations between Etna volcano and local culture are testified also by the huge participation in celebrating Saint Agatha as the Patron Saint of the city of Catania. In fact, the Saint is even today worshipped because she posed her sacred veil upon the city protecting it and its inhabitants against the peril of earthquake and volcanic effusions since the tremendous Etna's eruption on February 252, just one year later her supposed day of death. After this event, a crowded procession along the streets of Catania is held yearly, twice during the month of February and one time in August. This festival is capable of attracting millions of people, mainly coming from the whole Sicily and even from Italy and abroad. The survey is designed to profile the narratives regarding the worships of Saint Agatha, including the several and diverse religious events dedicated to the Saint. The chapter investigates how the sense of religion and the popular worship for Saint Agatha are linkable to local 'sense of place', 'place attachment', and 'perception' of natural risks. For this purpose, a case study has been performed, following a mix procedure for achieving data, namely mixing sources of different nature, interviewing local experts and students, and comparing findings with the authors' personal knowledge and geographical experience about the local reality.

**Keywords:** Natural risks, Etna volcano, Popular religiosity, Catania, Saint Agatha.

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