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La Cappella della *Salita al Calvario* al Sacro Monte di Varallo la visualizzazione dell' *Imitatio Christi*

This article focuses on the 36th chapel of the 45 chapels at the Sacro Monte de Varallo in Italy, a large hillside construct of a model pilgrimage route to Jerusalem. This article examines the iconographic program of this chapel in terms of both the typological traditions and the worship form known as "the Imitation of Christ" from the late medieval period onwards, indicating that it is a firmly detailed, powerful work. Further, this article is worthy of high praise for its splendid fusion and balance of onsite and archival research, the two fundamental modes of art historical inquiry.

Of the generations of bishops who worked on the project, Bishop Carlo Bascapè (r: 1593-1615) was the most actively involved in the creation of the Sacro Monte and directed the construction and iconography of the 36th chapel. Previous scholarship has indicated his interest in typology and the visualization of "the Imitation of Christ." In this regard, this article is original in the following two ways. First, the author interpreted the previously unstudied framed picture iconography "Abimelech, king of Shechem, attacks the people of Schechem" as the typology of Christ on the Road to Calvary, by fully examining previous research on the subject and analyzing the iconography in terms of their inscriptions and Bascapè's texts. Second, this interpretation was further strengthened by a study of the movement of the gaze of the pilgrims of the day. In other words, this study clarified that pilgrims who view the chapel interior through small peephole windows have their gaze drawn to the actions of the figure of Simon of Cyrene. Visitors would also see Christ bearing the Cross, and the framed picture "Abimelech, king of Shechem, and his

Men, cut and carry the brushwood” hanging on the wall behind the figures. This article is further praiseworthy for its positioning of this interpretation in an even broader context, namely the religious context of the northern Italian Counter-Reformation as symbolized by Carlo Borromeo.

The majority of the chapels at Sacro Monte di Varallo are decorated in a mix of polychromed wooden sculptures and wall paintings, and they are in turn dramatic, theological, emotive, intellectual, mystical and popular. Indeed, their conflicting characteristics, in the end, create a strangely wonderful space.

This article is a new attempt at an interpretation of the art historical and religious meaning and function of this unique Sacro Monte phenomenon. We hereby award the *Bijutsushi* Article Prize to this article.