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THE MILITARY TERRITORIALIZATION OF ASIAGO
PLATEAU DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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INTRODUCTION

Slender and solid trenches, dark underground emplacements, concrete water tanks, ruined walls of barracks and warehouses: many of the artefacts created during the First World War are still existing and visible on Asiago Plateau. These are artefacts that remind us of the transformation, as heavy as pervading and ephemeral, endured by the plateau during the Great War. Traces witness of a territory created during the war and for the war, radically different from the existing traditional one: cultivated fields, lush grazing lands and wide forests were quickly engraved by numerous military infrastructures and destroyed by artillery bombardments.

This paper represents the study of this territory and of its transformations: from the century-aged traditional use of the land for agriculture and animal farming to the first symptoms of war with the construction of several frontier fortifications; then the flee of the local population and the heavy battles that disarranged and changed the nature of the Plateau; eventually the recovery of the land and the return to the traditional use of it.

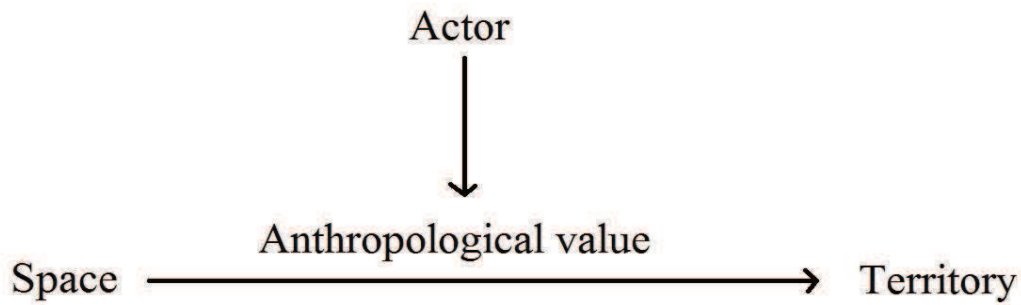
Starting from the studies of Angelo Turco on sub-saharan basic territorialization and those of Andrea Pase on territorial judicial systems, this paper aims to apply the category of analysis developed by the two previous authors to a specific geographical (Asiago Plateau) and chronological (the First World War) context. The purpose is to verify whether the army, during that conflict, created a new and different territory from the existing one, in other words if the army developed a process of military territorialization.

The study will focus on the modalities of creation and implementation of this process, its influence over the existing territory, the conflicts arose from this implementation and its results.

The present analysis seeks to show that territory is not a fixed and constant element but it is a social product constantly evolving, the result of historical and environmental changes that influence the society.

FROM SPACE TO TERRITORY

Territory can be defined as a portion of space pinpointed and delimited by a society which appoint to it an anthropological value.



“[...] sebbene «deposto» in un ambito naturale in qualche lontano inizio, un gruppo umano vive, cresce ed evolve grazie alle trasformazioni che imprime all'ambiente nel quale è originariamente insediato. Lo spazio naturale, dunque, grazie all'azione trasformativa, acquista valore antropologico, diventa un artefatto, si connota progressivamente come territorio.”¹

The changing action carried out by a society upon space is called *territorialization*: by adopting the categories of analysis developed by Pase² and Turco³ in their studies we can study this process, identifying modalities and times of implementation.

Turco highlights that this process of implementation occurs through three main axis:

1. the first, the intellectual one, sees the actor involved in the recognition and cognitive acquisition of the territory around him, surveying the useful or dangerous elements of the surrounding environment;
2. the second, the material one, sees the society elaborating the data acquired during the first stage and acting physically upon the space to adapt it to the necessity of the actor;
3. the third, territorial shaping, sees the creation of space boundaries that introduce the division internal/external, necessary to establish who is allowed to get in and who is excluded from the territory thus created.⁴

Preliminary to the implementation of the territorialization process, the actor must be sure to have

1 Turco Angelo, *Africa subsahariana: cultura, società, territorio*, Milano, Unicopoli, 2002, pag. 115: “[...] despite being «laid down» in a natural area in some far beginning, a human group lives, grows and evolves through the transformations it applies to the environment it inhabits. Natural space, thus, thanks to the changing action, gains anthropological value, it becomes an artefact, it progressively connotes itself as a territory.”

2 Pase Andrea, *Linee sulla terra: confini politici e limiti fondiari in Africa subsahariana*, Roma, Carocci, 2011

3 Turco Angelo, *Verso una teoria geografica della complessità*, Milano, Unicopoli, 1988

4 Turco, *Africa...*, quoted, pag. 116

some legitimacy to do it as opposed to its rivals, so to have the supremacy, and the respect, of the decisions he undertakes⁵: to study this aspect of the army organization during the First World War, the theories of Giorgio Agamben, as presented in the book “*Stato di eccezione*”⁶, has been used. The army usually acts during the State of war, which is a situation of law anomie, in other words a “State of exception”: in this situation an anomalous suspension of ordinary law happens. The effects of this legal vagueness had a major influence upon the implementation of the military territorialization.

As soon as its legitimacy has been established over the process, the actor starts with the survey of the landscape, first of the axis pointed out by Turco, pinpointing and identifying those features of the terrain which he finds interesting for him. This first action over the terrain, called *denomination*, allows the actor to gain a symbolic control over the space and can be *of* three types:

1. *Referential*, when toponyms identify the features referring to the actor or to other features. Consequently the construction of the territory can be both reflective, when the actor is the promoting subject, and objective, when referred to “absolute” features like Sun/Moon motion or other terrain elements (hills, basins, forests, grasslands, etc.). This denomination permits the actor to move around without getting lost.
2. *Symbolic*, when the given names act as a cultural archive, allowing the positioning of events that influenced the actor and to identify areas by their use: spaces for living, for cultivating, for praying, for fighting, etc.
3. *Performative*, when given names describe terrain qualities truly observed and not based on subjective belief: the fertility of a terrain so denominated must have an empirical corroboration.

Thanks to the identification of these features the actor can create an image of the terrain, what can be used and what the actor wants to do, setting his actions: this corresponds to the second axis, the *reification*.

Apart from the denomination of terrain features, cognitive appropriation is accomplished also by mean of cartographic representation of the landscape: so the actor can materialize his project.

Finally the actor operates physically on the terrain, modelling it on his necessities and intentions and shaping his territory design: this third axis is called *structurization* and consists of three

5 In subsaharian Africa the sources of this legitimacy can be many and various: traditions, religions, ancestors, leadership, legacy, approval, etc. In early 19th century Europe government legitimacy originates from a complex set of laws, norms and uses better know as jurisprudence. See Pase, quoted, pag. 61

6 Trad.: “State of exception”

elements:

1. *Housing*, which includes all fixed and mobile structures for homing;
2. *Productive*, which encompasses all the industries, exchange spaces and structures for goods moving;
3. *Legitimacy*, in other words all those structures that shows and administrate power.

The ones just described are the fundamental elements of the territorialization process of human societies: this process can be independent or can be influenced by a nearby society in case of contact. In consideration of this aspect, Turco analyse the process both as self-centred and out-centred. In the first case the actor runs the process in complete autonomy, whereas in the second it comes under the influence of an external actor. In the latter case there may be different degrees of disruption:

1. *Integration*, which occurs when the actor absorb the influence;
2. *Appropriation*, which happens when the actor takes over one or more of the process stages;
3. *Domination*, which occurs when the external actor takes over the complete process, replacing the local actor.

The categories of analysis previously described have been employed in this study to a specific geographic area and time: the Altopiano dei Sette Comuni (Plateau of the Seven Municipalities, from now on just Plateau) during the First World War. This area has been chosen because of the numerous artefacts still existing from that conflict that shows us a territory completely different from the actual one; the geographical delimitation of the plateau, surrounded on three sides by deep valleys that clearly separate it from the nearby mountains and the Venetian plain, that allows to confine the study; the several and heavy battles that involved this territory during the Great War and that forced both armies to a steady and pervading presence on the plateau: of these battles we can remind the Battle of the forts (May-July 1915), Austro-Hungarian Spring Offensive (May- June 1916) and the Italian counter-offensive (July 1916), Battle of Mount Ortigara (June 1917), of the Three Mounts (December 1917-January 1918), of the Solstice (June 1918) and the final Italian offensive (October-November 1918).

The present work is organized in five chapters, following a wide-to-focus and past-to-present method: the analysis starts from a geographical level of national scale and slowly restricts to the Altopiano and from a temporal one that starts from Italian Unification to present days.

Following the scheme already presented, the first chapter is focused on legitimacy, preliminary

stage of territorial creation: through the study of the State of war as a State of exception, the peculiarities will be highlighted of war jurisprudence and its evolution on national and international scale, from mid-Nineteen century until the First World War; the second analyses representation modalities of the army, based on Italian national defence plans and influenced by the claims over the “Terre Irredente” (Italian-speaking territories under Austro-Hungarian rule) and the international relations with the adjacent States; the third describes schematically the traditional territorialization of the plateau before the war, its story, characteristics and evolution over the time; the fourth deepens and focuses the analysis on the military territorialization of the plateau: from the early, only apparently pacific coexistence to the complete takeover by the army after spring 1916, with the flee of the local population and the creation of pervading military structures; finally, the fifth chapter focus on the effects and influences of military territorialization after the conflict, from the recovery period to, a century later, the projects of promotion and restoration.

CHAPTER I

THE NORM OF EXCEPTION: STATES OF SIEGE AND WAR IN ITALIAN JURISPRUDENCE OF EARLY 20TH CENTURY

In his analysis of territorialization process, Pase finds in jurisprudence one of the components of the link between society and territory. Indeed territory and jurisprudence share at least two aspects: on one side both induce an organization into societies, in other words regulate, define and limit social, political and economical relations of individuals inside the territory; on the other there exists an aspect of reciprocity, since territory “*utilizza il diritto per esplicare e «solidificare» i limiti, le regole di accesso e di uso dei territori*”⁷ and law “*senza la sua «proiezione al suolo»*”⁸ loses its capacity to regulate social relations.

Moreover law appoints legitimacy to the society that intend to impose its territorial project: legitimacy is therefore necessary to obtain the supremacy of that particular project against adversaries and to assure the respect of law itself.⁹

The first step to analyze the territorialization process developed by the Italian army during the Great War, is therefore to study the jurisprudence that regulates it, the source of its legitimacy and the subsequent effects on ordinary law. The relation between the army and the territory expresses itself through a special form of law, a *state of exception*, better known as the state of siege and war.

Between Nineteen and Twentieth centuries the state of siege used to be a special decree of necessity and urgency applied all those times when the safety of the State and its juridical order where in danger. As recognizable in the name itself, the application of the state of siege was meant to answer rapidly and effectively to a situation of conflict involving cities or fortifications: times and location of the decree where therefore subject to the existence of a specific kind of emergency. However its was not always easy to establish when a fortification or a city was to consider under siege and for how long the decree should stay in force. Considering the law as inside the *Codice Penale per l'Esercito*¹⁰, put in force on 28/12/1869, article 246 says:

7 “*uses law to define and «solidify» limits, rules of admission and use of territories*”

8 “*without its «ground projection»*”

9 Pase Andrea, quoted, pagg. 36, 51-55, 61, 64-65

10 “*Penal code for the Army*”, specifically chapter II, artt. 243-251

“Allorché il territorio di una divisione militare o quello dependente da una piazza di guerra, fortezza o posto militare, saranno invasi da truppe nemiche, ovvero saranno le stesse a distanza minore di tre giornate ordinarie di marcia, dovrà quel territorio o piazza di guerra, fortezza o posto militare essere considerato in istato di guerra se il comandante delle truppe ivi stanziato lo avrà ordinato con apposita dichiarazione”¹¹

Interestingly, in the definition, the state of siege is a consequence, clearly, of the military manoeuvres of an hostile army during a conflict - that is - the state of war. Despite this, war may be fought not only against enemy troops: during huge protests or upheavals the conflict can develop inside the State and engage – and be promoted – by the citizens. If police was supposed to be not sufficient to face the problem, then the army can be put on the field.

“Lo stato d'assedio [...] può essere determinato da due categorie di motivi: o da sommosse e rivoluzioni intestine, o da una guerra che obblighi lo Stato a render maggiormente forte all'interno con provvedimenti eccezionali per potere così più energicamente combattere i nemici esteriori.”¹²

We can see then how a measure intended to respond to a conflict between two States may be used also, exceptionally and in specific cases, inside the State.

Already at this point some juridical questions arise: the *Codice Penale* specifies that, to implement the state of siege, there must be a conflict – that is – a state of war; moreover citizens cannot be compared to trained troops and the use of military force might be excessive.¹³ (see the harsh and contested repression of Milan upheavals in 1898 by Gen. Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris)

11 *“When the territory of a division or that one dependent from a fortification or military emplacement is invaded by enemy troops, or they are at a distance of three days of ordinary march, that territory, fortification or military emplacement must be considered under state of war, if the commander of the troops here located will order so.”*

12 Orlando Vittorio Emanuele, *Lo stato d'assedio nel diritto pubblico italiano*, in Archivio di diritto pubblico, Anno IV, vol. IV, Palermo, 1894, pag. 83: *“State of siege [...] can be put on force by two kind of reasons: internal upheavals or revolutions, or by a war that force the State to be stronger inside through exceptional laws, so to face more powerfully external enemies.”* See also Morrone Andrea, *Le ordinanze di necessità ed urgenza, tra storia e diritto*, pag. 8, in Vignudelli A. (a cura di), *Istituzioni e dinamiche di diritto. I confini mobili della separazione dei poteri*, Milano, 2009, pagg. 133-184: *“Considered by the best doctrine as a «violent action, burst somewhere in the country, against the security of the State and the public order», very similar to a war (despite no positive law had predicted so), in other words a «war between brothers», which meant «extraordinary limitations of liberty (...), loss or restriction of constitutional rights, that are under its protection, concentration of all political powers under the military authority and military courts, on the matter of some specific crimes and people».*

13 Longhi Silvio, *Sull'ultimo decreto di stato d'assedio*, in Rivista di diritto pubblico, vol. I, 1909, pagg. 140-141. Interestingly, for the author, what discern insurgents from regular troops is the scarce mastery of the territory.

The definition given by Orlando introduces the main set of problems linked with the state of siege: due to law ambiguity, there was an unclear distinction between state of war and state of siege and the implementation of the latter was therefore controversial.¹⁴ The inclination of jurisprudence was to consider state of war and of siege the same thing and to transfer, for analogy, norms of the first in the latter.¹⁵

The problem saw several debates at the parliament, constantly renovated each time the state of siege was used, also because of the frequency of its implementation in the just born State of Italy affected by strong centrifugal forces. Morrone gives us a detailed list:

*“La storia d'Italia dall'Unità al fascismo ha registrato i seguenti stati d'assedio (oltre alle misure eccezionali contro il brigantaggio che portarono alla legge c.d. Pica del 15 agosto del 1863) proclamati con altrettanti regi decreti: 3 aprile 1849 (Genova), 29 febbraio 1852 (Sassari), 17 e 20 agosto 1862 (in Sicilia e nelle provincie napoletane), 22 settembre 1866 (a Palermo [...]), 3 e 6 gennaio 1894 (in Sicilia [...] e poi in Lunigiana), 7 e 9 maggio 1898 (per i tumulti a Milano contro il caropane, con la repressione del generale Bava Beccaris, stato di assedio esteso poi a Firenze, Livorno e poi a Napoli), 3 gennaio 1909 (Messina e Reggio Calabria dopo il terremoto del 28 dicembre 1908 [...])”*¹⁶

It is interesting to note the last case of implementation of the state of siege before the First World War: at that time the army was the only organization able to deploy enough men and resources to

14 Traversa Antonio, *Lo “stato di necessità” nel Diritto pubblico interno*, Stab. Tip. Luigi Pierro e Figlio, Napoli, 1916, pag. 83; see also Orlando, quoted, pagg. 86, 89: “Therefore nor the Codice Penale per l'esercito nor the Albertine Statute, nor any law, include any disposition about the state of siege; what is left are only some scarce parliamentary common laws and a big confusion inside jurisprudence and public opinion.”

15 Several jurists did not agree with this analogy procedure and preferred to distinguish the two measures upon the context: state of war was to be considered as consequence of an international conflict (between two or more countries) and state of siege as consequence of internal troubles. Therefore state of war could have been followed by the state of siege but not vice versa. See Orlando, quoted, pag. 84: “[...] military state of siege, which we will call state of war, [...] was consequence of a special international juridical situation. [...] State of war is often followed in some regions by the state of siege, but the latter can be independent from the first.” And pag. 86: “[...] constitutional analogy between state of war and of siege must be rejected.”; Traversa, quoted, pag. 84-85: “The two aspects of political siege and military siege, shows huge substantial differences and can not be considered the same. The first is referred internal jurisprudence; the latter presume a conflict and, therefore, a declaration of war.”; Longhi, quoted, pag. 141: “[State of siege] certainly do not presume those peculiar international condition, basis of the military authority during the state of war.”

16 Morrone, quoted, pag. 9: “Italian history from Unification till fascism recorded the following states of siege (other than the exceptional measures against brigandage that brought to the so called Pica law of 15th August 1863) each proclaimed by royal decree: 3rd April 1849 (Genoa), 29th February 1852 (Sassari), 17th and 20th August 1862 (in Sicily and Neapolitan provinces), 22nd September 1866 (in Palermo [...]), 3rd and 6th January 1894 (in Sicily [...] and then Lunigiana), 7th and 9th May 1898 (because of Milan uprisings against the price of the bread, with the repression of General Bava Beccaris, state of siege then extended to Florence, Livorno and then Neaples), 3rd January 1909 (Messina and Reggio Calabria after the earthquake of 28th December 1908 [...])”; see also Agamben, quoted, pag. 27

intervene quickly in any situation inside the country. The of the state of siege could have been implemented, paradoxically, even without a war or an uprising.

Longhi justifies this paradox with the impossibility by the civil power (too slow to operate, due to the long parliamentary procedures) to rapidly re-establish the order in those places affected by war or upheavals.

“[Lo] stato d'assedio [...] mira a sostituire allo stato di anarchia creato dalla guerra o dalle forze telluriche una organizzazione dei pubblici poteri, che erano spariti, travolti dal disastro. In questo ultimo caso, poiché non sarebbe possibile ricostruire, tutto d'un colpo, in quello stato caotico, una organizzazione civile, non resta che proclamare lo stato d'assedio in base al codice penale [militare], che permette il ritorno immediato dell'ordine giuridico, sia pure per mezzo di organi eccezionali.”¹⁷

It's the temporary situation of emergency that justifies, in other words legitimates, the implementation of the state of siege, the only one that allows the rapid deployment of the army and the return of normality.

But this has a price: as we can see in Orlando and Longhi's quotes the resolution of the emergency must be carried out through *exceptional* means. And this means consists of the temporary suspension of ordinary jurisprudence upon the areas affected by the states of siege or war and the application of military jurisprudence. In these territory, therefore, as pointed out by Agamben, a “state of exception” is established:

“[Il] sintagma «stato di eccezione» [...] è estraneo alle dottrine italiana e francese, che preferiscono parlare di decreti di urgenza e stato di assedio. [...] Benché da una parte (nello stato d'assedio) il paradigma sia l'estensione in ambito civile dei poteri che competono all'autorità militare in tempo di guerra, e, dall'altra, una sospensione della costituzione (o di quelle norma costituzionali che proteggono le libertà individuali), i due modelli finiscono col

17 Longhi, quoted, pag. 153: “State of siege aims to replace the anarchy subsequent to a conflict or an earthquake with an organization of public power, that disappeared, destroyed by the disaster. In the latter case, since it is not possible to reconstruct immediately - in that chaotic situation - a civil organization, there is not any other solution than declare the state of siege under the Codice civile [per l'esercito] that allow the immediate return of jurisprudence, even if under exceptional means.” See also Orlando, quoted, pag. 95: “[...] the concept itself of state of siege, where the military nuance is the peculiar characteristic. Indeed, extraordinary civil powers are gathered in military hands, not only because often the garrison must be increased since the army is the best guarantee of civic order, but also because - under this military concentration - public offices are persuaded to a higher efficiency.”

tempo nel confluire in un unico fenomeno giuridico, che chiamiamo stato di eccezione.”¹⁸

The concept has been outlined in the following scheme.

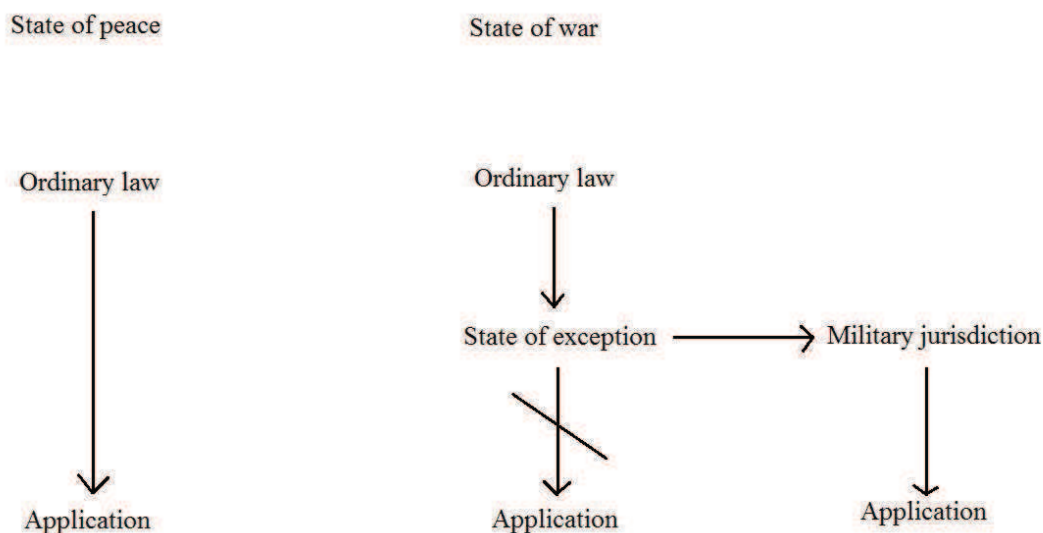


Image 1

In the state of peace a direct consequential relation between ordinary law and its application subsists; during the state of war, between ordinary law and its application there is the insertion of the state of exception, represented in our case by the Codice Penale per l'esercito: the consequence is the suspension of ordinary law that, although its existence, it is not applied.

*“La sospensione della norma non significa la sua abolizione e la zona di anomia che essa instaura non è (o, almeno, pretende di non essere) senza relazione con l'ordine giuridico.”*¹⁹

In case of state of war, the connection with juridical order is represented by military jurisprudence

¹⁸ Agamben, quoted, pagg. 13-14: “[The] verb phrase «state of exception» [...] is extraneous to Italian and French doctrines, which prefer to speak about urgency decrees and state of siege. [...] Despite the paradigm (in the state of siege) from one side is the extension of military powers over the civil sphere, and, on the other, the suspension of the Constitution (or those constitutional laws that protect individual freedom), the two models ends with time to merge in a juridical phenomena that we call state of exception.” See also Orlando, quoted, pag. 83: “State of siege, in its more technical, full and usual meaning, consists on the suspension of constitutional freedom and on the concentration of civil powers in military hands, creating a martial jurisdiction also for citizens.”

¹⁹ Agamben, quoted, pagg. 33-34: “The suspension of the law does not mean its abolition and the zone of anomie that it creates is not (or at least pretends not to be) without connection with jurisprudence.”

and by the fact that it is the King to declare the state of war.²⁰

The basis – and the justification – of this suspension was the old Latin motto “*salus rei publicae suprema lex*”: in situations of emergency and threat to the State integrity, the suspension of ordinary law was admitted for its safety, until the extinction of the exceptional situation.

“[...] *salus rei publicae suprema lex esto: ci sono, cioè, le leggi positive, ma c'è una legge suprema avanti a tutte, di fronte alla quale tutte devono cedere, la conservazione dello Stato. È questa la lex legum, derivante dai principi fondamentali del diritto, superiore quindi allo statuto, superiore allo Stato stesso, perché necessaria in ogni tempo, in ogni luogo, sempre, e perché sta nella natura delle cose.*”²¹

The implementation of the state of siege had huge consequences over ordinary jurisprudence: suspension of ordinary laws, constitutional guarantees, conferment of legislative power to the army commanders and creation of military courts.

Military jurisprudence was composed of the already quoted Codice Penale per l'esercito, then integrated in 1889 by the Zanardelli's penal code and 1913 new penal code: “*si trattava di un sistema complesso, non privo di lacune e di carenza di coordinamento tra codici e tra questi e legislazione di guerra.*”²²

“*Nel diritto pubblico interno, così, la necessità della salute pubblica deviava l'attività legislativa dello Stato fuori dei modi e degli organi costituzionali e violava o limitava il*

20 Idem, pagg. 42-43: “*The gap here is not about lack in the jurisprudence that has to be integrated by the judge [the norm exists indeed and it's the military law]; it rather concerns a suspension of actual jurisprudence to safeguard its existence. Far from answering to a lack of jurisprudence, state of exception shows itself as the opening of a fake gap in jurisprudence to protect the existence of the law and its application in normal situation. The gap is not inside the law but concern its relation with reality, the possibility of its application. It's like if jurisprudence contains an essential fracture located between the law and its application and that can be, in extreme cases, filled only by the state of exception, that is by creating an area where the application is suspended, but the law is still there, in force.*” and moreover see pagg. 48-49; see also Morrone, quoted, pag. 6; Orlando, quoted, pag. 93: “*The suspension of public freedom in exceptional times cannot be considered as a suppression of constitutional guarantees but, under a certain point of view, the protection of them from revolts so they can regain their normal function in the future.*”

21 Orlando, quoted, pagg. 91-921: “[...] *salus rei publicae suprema lex esto: there are positive laws, but there is a supreme law that come before all, in face of which all laws have to cede, and that is State preservation. This is the lex legum, coming from the principles of jurisprudence, superior to the statute, superior even to the State itself, because necessary anytime, anywhere, always, and because it stays in the nature of things.*” See also Agamben, quoted, pag. 46; Morrone, quoted, pag. 5-6: “*In this way the face of ordinances that waive law seems like god Janus: facing, one side, to the safeguard of law and, the other, functional to actual necessities, that justify any mean, even against the law.*”

22 Latini Carlotta, *Una giustizia d'eccezione. Specialità della giurisdizione militare e sua estensione durante la Prima guerra mondiale*, pagg. 69-70, in DEP – Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile www.unive.it/media/allegato/dep/Ricerche/4_Latini.pdf, “*it was a complex system, not free from lacks and deficiency of coordination between codes and between codes and military jurisprudence.*”

diritto soggettivo privato della libertà che l'individuo vantava di fronte allo Stato nei suoi vari aspetti, come quello della libertà di locomozione [...], la libertà di opinione e di espressione delle proprie convinzioni, la libertà di riunione, di associazione. In particolare, in alcuni casi lo stato di necessità determinato dalla guerra si rifletteva anche sulle norme del procedimento penale, specie nei rapporti tra diritto militare e diritto comune, tenendo presente che erano le norme processuali quelle che assicuravano e tutelavano le guarentigie cioè le libertà costituzionali. Com'è ovvio, il tempo di guerra estendeva notevolmente in campo su cui si esercitava la giurisdizione militare, sia rispetto alle persone, sia rispetto ai reati, incidendo sulla costituzione del collegio giudicante e sulla procedura, con la costituzione di tribunali di guerra e straordinari.”²³

Inside the state of exception – created by the state of siege – not only some rights are restricted but also the separation of powers is affected. Particularly, art. 251 of the Codice Penale empowered martial authority of the legislative power inside the areas under state of war, by means of decrees, regulations and ordinances having the status of laws: this power lie outside the hierarchy of sources of law and the control of government authorities and constitutional guarantees.

“[...] all'art. 251 si finirebbe col riconoscere tale sconfinata estensione da potersi prestare alla distruzione dell'intero codice.”²⁴

Eventually, because of the different jurisprudence, martial authority required special courts to judge under martial laws and those were the martial courts. Not only military personnel can be judged under them but – in some cases – also civilians:

²³ Latini, quoted, pagg. 73-74: *“In internal public law, therefore, the necessity of public safety deviated the legislative function of the State outside the means and the constitutional authorities and violated or restricted subjective private law of freedom that each person can claim in face of the State in several aspects, like freedom of movement [...], opinion and expression, reunion and association. Particularly, in some cases the state of necessity subsequent to a conflict was visible over the norms of penal suit, specially in relation with the connection between military and ordinary law, kept in mind that the proceeding norms where the ones that ensured and protected constitutional guarantees – that are – citizens freedom. As obvious, war time extended widely the field of martial jurisdiction, both towards people and crimes, influencing jury composition and procedure, by means of war courts.”* See also Longhi, quoted, pagg. 147-148: *“[...] articles 545 and 547 of the Codice Penale per l'esercito specify the jurisdiction of the state of war, stating which courts should be establish and how also non-military personnel is under its jurisdiction, for specific crimes – namely – the ones that can meddle with war actions. Moreover art. 251 allows the absolute extension of martial jurisdiction over any citizen and for any crime, giving to martial authority the power, for the time being of the state of war, to publish decrees inside their jurisdiction.”*

²⁴ Longhi, quoted, pag. 148: *“[...] art. 251 Could have – therefore – so much power to destroy the entire jurisprudence.”* See also Latini, quoted, pagg. 72-73: *“This delegated legislative power revealed itself with decrees that were true laws but definitely not tied to the procedures of law formation and promulgation.”*

*“Secondo Manzini solo nei casi espressamente riconosciuti dalla legge era possibile sottoporre un civile al tribunale militare, e quindi solo quando questi fosse rimesso alla competenza del giudice militare commettendo un reato militare o concorrendo a commetterlo secondo le previste normative. Questi casi erano disciplinati dagli articoli 545 e seguenti del codice penale per l'esercito.”*²⁵

This aspect ignited several debates as well, since art. 71 of the Albertine Statute forbade to turn away citizens from their natural judge: again routine had to bend in face of urgency and necessity.²⁶ We have seen then how, inside those territories under state of siege, the state of exception entails strong effects of perturbation over jurisprudence. Consequently it was necessary, for civilian authorities, to contain as much as possible areas and effects of the state of exception, so to avoid the propagation of its effects and the destabilization of the entire system.

Per se the limits of the state of exception are implicit: exception, as it is, must have a certain duration and area of effect, unless it would be indistinct from normal situation. But these limits are hardly identifiable in sure and definitive way since exception is always linked to military operations or natural phenomena, which cannot be predicted – either times nor areas they effect: the result is always a generic formulation.

In the case of the state of exception, timing is fundamental for both justify its implementation and define its duration:

*“[...] lo stato d'assedio dev'essere sempre misura assolutamente repressiva di movimento popolare già iniziatosi, di turbamento di ordine pubblico già avvenuto. [...] Se l'atto fosse soltanto in vista o temuto, perché non provvederebbe direttamente il potere legislativo colle forme ordinarie, o autorizzando decreti d'urgenza?”*²⁷

“[Lo stato d'assedio è] un provvedimento eccezionale, determinato esclusivamente dalla

25 Latini, quoted, pagg. 68: *“In Manzini's opinion, only in those cases recognised by the law it was possible to subdue a civilian to martial courts – that is – only when he had committed a martial crime or contributed to it according to actual norms. These cases were regulated by articles 545 and followings of the Codice Penale per l'esercito.”*

26 Latini, quoted, pag. 74; see also Longhi, quoted, pagg. 141, 148: *“[...] the lacking of a specific norm that regulates the matter, not without artifice will be implicitly permitted, among necessary urgency decrees for security and public order, the possibility to suspend ordinary law – the regular operation of which is so solemnly guaranteed, and in the most absolute way, by articles 70 and 71 of our Statute.”*

27 Longhi, quoted, pag. 147: *“[...] state of siege must always be a repressive measure of an already started uprising, of already happened perturbation of public order. [...] If these events would be only feared or predicted, why should not the legislative power provide for with the usual forms or by approving urgency decrees?”*

necessità della difesa politica dello Stato, e che cessa appena cessa la condizione giuridica anormale che l'ha provocato."²⁸

Space delimitation is also important, for several aspects. As seen at the beginning of this chapter, law exists when in force over a territory clearly delimited; the territorial link contributes to avoid the excessive extension of effects of art. 251 of the Codice Penale per l'esercito and of martial courts authority; eventually it can be believed that martial law is way less developed than ordinary law because it has been created to norm only a state of exception – that is war – and a limited social group – that is the army. Too wide extension of this normative deficiency would have afflicted too many people, depriving them of rights and duties set by the Statute, with imaginable consequences. Both in the state of siege and war, the regions where this measure was to be implemented were quoted in a royal decree. Under the state of war, these regions were further partitioned into “operation zone” and “behind the line zone”: inside the first martial law was strictly observed while inside the second, where usually civilians were still living in, a milder version was in force and both ordinary and martial courts were working alongside each other.²⁹

Since now state of exception and its effects have been analysed inside Italy as consequence of the state of siege: but for the state of war there is another aspect to be considered. We have seen how, for some jurists, state of war differs from state of siege because of its link with – and derivation from – an international condition. We will see how, in this condition as well, state of exception exercises its influence.

Until the end of Nineteenth century, no international law existed to regulate conflicts between countries. But the pervasive necessity of regulation of European States and the massification of war – with its wider influence over societies – persuaded the biggest economies of the time to meet each other in two main conferences at The Hague, in 1899 and 1907, with the aim of filling this normative gap in international law. In those occasions only general guidelines were decided and

28 Orlando, quoted, pag. 92: “[State of siege is] *an exceptional measure, put in force exclusively by the necessity of State protection, and that end as soon as the abnormal juridical situation that started it, ends.*”; see also Morrone, quoted, pag. 36: “[...] *rules created by decrees of urgency and emergency presume situation of absolute extraordinary urgent necessity, that is a situation extra ordinem, in face of which jurisprudence consider the possibility to take measures sui generis. Extraordinarity, provisionality and proportionality are its essential requisites. These measures are the source of exceptional norms, justified by and valid for the context, to apply actual law and not to create new ones.*”

29 Latini, quoted, pagg. 75-77: “*Martial law system was therefore intended to punish in the war zone, where danger was more imminent and damage could be more relevant. Outside this zone ordinary penal law was in force. At jurisprudential level [...] this implementation was left behind preferring to apply martial law over the entire State, considered in its whole as a war zone.*” and moreover: “*Operation zone was under a special regime of military police: inside it the army was on duty and it was to be considered in the presence of the enemy.*”

wide areas of anomie were left to be covered by common sense and *jus gentium*.³⁰

To this problem another has to be added – that is – the historical tendency of European National States, as old as the beginning of modern era, to create clear and sharp boundaries, with the shape of continuous lines and established by mutual agreements between States. Projected on the ground by means of maps and fixed to the soil by boundary stones and other symbols, these were functional to the concept of inclusivity/exclusivity, indispensable to define where sovereignty of each State ends, where the law of each nation was in force and where not, who was to be considered citizen and who not. This is nothing more than the implementation of a territorial project and those “territorial judicial systems” that:

*“[...] permettono di identificare e di descrivere chiaramente in che modo in un determinato contesto sociale vengano disegnate le delimitazioni territoriali, a chi appartengano i territori delimitati, quali siano le regole di accesso, di inclusione e di esclusione, insomma consente di definire tutti gli elementi necessari per determinare le specifiche unità società-territorio che li vigono.”*³¹

These territorial judicial systems concur avoiding a never ending state of conflict, both internal and external to the society (or, as in our case, the State), by mean of common set of rules.³²

Being territoriality a process that is not done in one time, static and forever valid but it is a constant development instead, the consequence is that judicial systems, and therefore their limits, are not

30 The preamble of The Hague convention (1899) say: “Considering that, [...] it is likewise necessary to have regard to cases where an appeal to arms may be caused by events which their solicitude could not avert; [the promoters] Animated by the desire to serve, even in this extreme hypothesis, the interests of humanity and the ever increasing requirements of civilization; Thinking it important, with this object, to revise the laws and general customs of war; either with the view of defining them more precisely or of laying down certain limits for the purpose of modifying their severity as far as possible; Inspired by these views which are enjoined at the present day, as they were twenty-five years ago at the time of the Brussels Conference in 1874, by a wise and generous foresight; Have, in this spirit, adopted a great number of provisions, the object of which is to define and govern the usages of war on land. In view of the High Contracting Parties, these provisions, the wording of which has been inspired by the desire to diminish the evils of war so far as military necessities permit, are destined to serve as general rules of conduct for belligerents in their relations with each other and with populations. It has not, however, been possible to agree forthwith on provisions embracing all the circumstances which occur in practice. On the other hand, it could not be intended by the High Contracting Parties that the cases not provided for should, for want of a written provision, be left to the arbitrary judgement of the military commanders. Until a more complete code of the laws of war is issued, the High Contracting Parties think it right to declare that in cases not included in the Regulations adopted by them, populations and belligerents remain under the protection and empire of the principles of international law, as they result from the usages established between civilized nations, from the laws of humanity, and the requirements of the public conscience.”

31 Pase, quoted, pag. 47: “[...] permits to clearly identify and describe how in a specific social context territorial limits are designed, the owners of the territory so delimited, the rules of access, inclusion and exclusion, hence it allows to define all the necessary elements to set the specific society-territory units active there.”

32 Pase, quoted, pagg. 16-17, 84.

fixed. Now, the border between two States can be changed by means of a pacific discussion of the old agreements or by forcing the territorial project of one State upon another. The recourse to force entails the extinction of the agreements that corroborate the border: therefore between the two entities there is not a well defined line anymore but a zone of transition, not always clearly defined due to military operation movements, filled by the state of exception – that is – the state of war.

In the following picture I tried to clarify the concept.

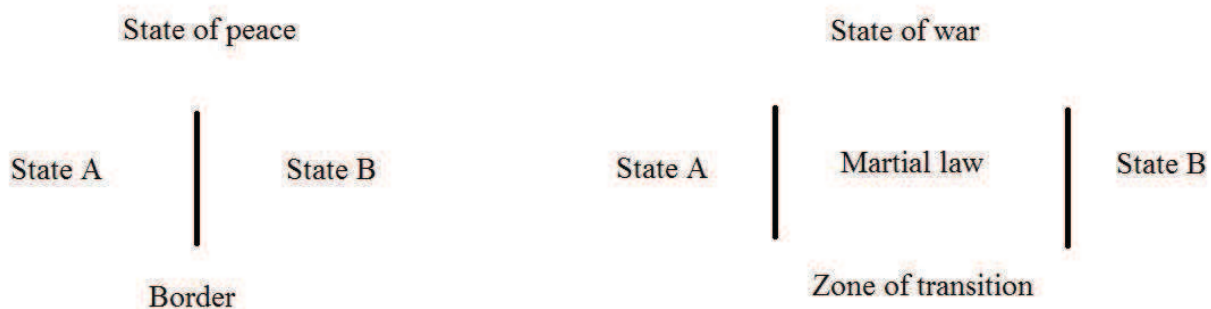


Image 2

It is visible therefore how, as a function of the judicial systems, it was necessary for European States to establish precisely their borders: for this reason there used to be a shared international tradition over agreements and treaties signed during peacetime for the definition of frontiers; on the contrary there was not, in wartime, a similar clear tradition on resolution or conduct of conflicts. The lack of a shared view over frontier location and the same lack of law seen for the state of siege, originate that discrepancy where the state of exception inserts itself. But this time state of exception is not inside a State but on the border between two of them, to form a sort of buffer between two neighbouring laws.

The declaration of war between two States created less pressing problems than the state of siege: it was ruled since peacetime by martial law and there wasn't conflicts over competency or authority with ordinary law; duration of the state of war was precisely established by official declaration of the States in conflict; territories affected were pinpointed by royal decrees. Nevertheless, in these territories the effects of the state of exception – as consequence of the war – remained unresolved: the suspension of some constitutional rights and guarantees, the formation of martial courts also for civilians and the legislative power of the military authorities.

We have seen how the state of exception inserts over a territory a zone of anomie in ordinary law by means of a suspension of civil rights (as in the state of siege) or a zone of transition between two States (as in the state of war). Like a matryoshka doll, the heart is the anomie, surrounded by the state of exception (in the forms of state of siege or war), contained inside ordinary law.

In this territory, where the state of exception is in force, military authority infers its legitimacy from ordinary law through the link created by the King with the Constitution (since he's Head of State and of the Army), the approval of the Codice Penale by the Parliament and the necessity of suspending ordinary law to preserve it from the perturbation. Military authority in that very territory, however, does not apply that law that infer its own legitimacy but an exceptional one, the martial law. And this is one of the main characteristics of state of exception:

“In verità lo stato di eccezione non è né esterno né interno all'ordinamento giuridico e il problema della sua definizione concerne una soglia, o una zona di indifferenza, in cui dentro e fuori non si escludono, ma s'indeterminano.”³³

³³ Agamben, quoted, pagg. 33-34: *“Truly state of exception is neither inside nor outside law and the problem of its definition concerns a threshold, or zone of indifference, where inside and outside doesn't exclude each other but indeterminate them.”*

CHAPTER II

REPRESENTATION MODALITIES

In the previous chapter the sources of army legitimacy, as promoter of a specific judicial system, have been exposed. As soon as this legitimacy has been established and recognized, the actor can implement his territorial project.

“Il gioco inizia con la rappresentazione del territorio che è una sorta di autoritratto del soggetto, di autorappresentazione del suo corpo territoriale, della sua espansione fisica, e che è immediatamente correlata con la sua identità.”³⁴

“Non si può costruire infatti un ordinamento territoriale se non si dispone di un’adeguata rappresentazione del territorio. Ovviamente per rappresentazione del territorio non si intende solamente la carta geografica, il mediatore principe della relazione tra società, politica e territorio in età moderna. Rappresentazione è in questo senso la forma individuata da una società per controllare da un punto di vista cognitivo un territorio: comprende quindi la denominazione e qualsiasi altra modalità verbale o grafica di descrizione della superficie terrestre e dei suoi contenuti naturali ed antropici. Non si può dare ordinamento della territorialità se la società non esprime una rappresentazione del territorio tale che sia possibile inscrivere in essa la delimitazione, il limite tra interno ed esterno, e che questa delimitazione risulti condivisibile dai membri della collettività.”³⁵

The army, despite the fact that it has a specific legitimacy and a strong identity made up of traditions, uses and norms, does not deploy an autonomous territorial project. It is not, in fact, an independent entity but one of the means of the State territorial judicial system: as that, the army

34 Pase, quoted, pagg. 61-62: “The game starts with the representation of the territory – that is – a sort of self-picture of the subject, a self-representation of his territorial body, of his physical expansion, and that is immediately correlated with his identity.”

35 Pase, quoted, pag. 98: “It's impossible indeed to create a judicial system without an adequate representation of the territory. Obviously territorial representation isn't just the map, the main mediator of relations between society, politics and territory in modern era. Representation is, in this sense, the way found by a society to control from a cognitive point of view the territory: it encompasses therefore denomination and all other verbal or pictorial means of description of the Earth surface and its natural and human elements. It is not possible to give a territorial judicial system if society does not express a representation of the territory inside which it might be possible to put the delimitation, the border between inside and outside, and this delimitation might result sharable by the community.”

defends territorial borders, expands them gaining new territories, safeguards the State legitimacy; substantially it protects the “[...] *intelaiatura territoriale delle relazioni sociali e le preserva dalla frammentazione, favorendo la coerenza interna.*”³⁶ The army acts following – and puts into practice – aspirations and needs of national politics, from repression of internal upheavals (Sicilian Vespri, Turin worker strikes, etc.) to the conquest of new territories.

The legitimacy of the army, that infers from the State, is limited to specific necessities and events, bounded to the state of exception: time and space of exception are extremely variable and so are legitimacy and territorial project of the army.

Legitimacy, representation modalities and territorial project of the army infer from – and depend on – the State territorialization: it will be necessary therefore to shortly analyse the latter in order to contextualize and comprehend the army territorial actions.

In the present chapter self-representation modalities of the Italian State and its territorial project over the “Terre Irredente” (Trentino, Südtirol and Venezia Giulia) will be presented; furthermore how the army implemented its territorialization, following the State national politics and international aims, locating those features of the terrain that may be useful from a military point of view.

IDENTITY AND SELF-REPRESENTATION (Natural and strategic border)

Since its birth, Italy has built up its inner and outer portrait on the idea of a national State, comprehensive of all the people with Italian language and culture. This has been the inspiring romantic principle of the independence wars and the claims over the “Terre Irredente”.

*“Una delle espressioni più inflazionate nella pubblicistica politica post-risorgimentale, ossessionatamente ripetuta come un mantra affinché si inculcasse nella testa degli italiani, era «Italia Irredenta»: indicava i territori sotto dominio asburgico abitati da popolazioni di cultura italiana (Trentino, Trieste, Istria e Dalmazia) dei quali si reclamava l’annessione al Regno d’Italia.”*³⁷

36 Pase, quoted, pag. 60: “[...] *territorial frame of social relations and safeguards them from fragmentation, promoting internal coherence.*”

37 Boria Edoardo, *Carte come armi: geopolitica, cartografia, comunicazione*, Roma, Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2012, pag. 42: “*One of the most common expression in political post-unification newspapers, obsessively repeated like a mantra in order to instil it inside the mind of Italians, was «Italia Irredenta»: it indicated the territories under Austrian domain, where populations with Italian culture were living in (Trentino, Trieste, Istria and Dalmatia) of which the annexation to Italy was claimed.*”

One of the main Italian territorial project was, therefore, to complete the national ethnic and geographical unification, basis of its identity. The annexation of those territories had both an ethnic and geographic justification: the first, we have seen, was due to the fact that the populations living there were Italian speakers, with culture, uses and costumes strongly influenced by Italy; the second, as clearly visible in the following picture, appealed more upon hydro-orographic considerations, for which the “Terre Irredente” were Italian for a geographic reason.



Image 3 This flyer depicts north-eastern Italy: in blue are highlighted the “mountain barriers” between the Italian and the German-Slavic basin. The map claims that life and relations of populations follow the course of rivers and are stopped by mountains: the cities of Trento, Trieste and Fiume and the respective regions of Trentino, Istria and Dalmatia are therefore Italian also for geographical reasons. The flyer ends with the exclamation “Italy to Italians!”. The specious highlighting of some rivers basins and mountain ridges is used as justification for claims over the “Terre Irredente”. Italian nationalistic flyer, circa 1917. [Map from http://www.14-18.it/mappa/IEI0366844_01, now also in Boria, quoted, pag. 45]

“A region [the Alps] seemingly designed by Nature to separate peoples by an impassable wall.”³⁸

“Molto più del perimetro costiero, assunto dopo l’Unità d’Italia nella sua interezza a frontiera marittima, l’arco alpino, quand’anche non ancora completamente aggregato, limite

38 Johnson Douglas Wilson, *Battlefields of the World War. Western and Southern Fronts. A Study in Military Geography*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1921, pag. 489

terrestre naturale della Penisola, costituì la frontiera per antonomasia del neonato Regno.”³⁹

So the Alps, per se a neutral complex of mountain ridges, gains a specific meaning in the claim for the “Terre Irredente”. To establish clearly and incontestably which ethnic group should be encompassed inside the national corpus is a moot point: the Alps, on the other hand, are a topographic entity that easily took on the incontestable value of territorial border. From the attachment of the frontier to this natural feature of the terrain came the definition of the “natural border” of Italy.

But that is not all: the Alps had also a strategic value, both because of their geographic position and military reasons.

*“Italy’s geographic form thus makes her peculiarly dependent upon the natural defensive qualities of her northern frontier, which a fraction of her man power must be able to defend successfully against greatly superior numbers until the whole can be mobilized. [...] When we add the fact that Italy’s vital industrial regions are in the north, centring about Milan, and depend for their protection on the defence of the Alpine barrier, the strategic significance of this northern battlefields can readily be appreciated.”*⁴⁰

Italian claims over north-eastern border regions officially aspired to the reunion of all Italian speaking people over the frontier and, unofficially, to reach those mountains ridges that were important from a military point of view.

*“È chiaro che, al di là dell’adesione sincera e disinteressata di molti al sostegno dei valori della nazione definita in termini etnici, nella realtà l’idea irredentista si prestava ottimamente a giustificare ambizioni di espansione territoriale o di indipendenza.”*⁴¹

“While the southern part of the Trentino is overwhelmingly Italian, the northern part, or «Alto Adige», [...] is as overwhelmingly German, and has been so for centuries. The fundamental

39 Ascoli Massimo e Russo Flavio, *La difesa dell’arco alpino, 1861-1940*, Roma, SME Ufficio Storico, 1999, pag. 5, 31: *“Way more than the coastal perimeter, completed in its integrity after the unification, the Alpine bow, even when not completely aggregated, natural land border of Italy, used to be the frontier par excellence of the just born Reign.”*

40 Johnson, quoted, pagg. 498-499.

41 Boria, quoted, pag. 43: *“It is clear that – beside the sincere and disinterested support of many to national values defined in ethnical terms – in reality the idea “irredentista” was useful to justify ambitions of expansion or independence.”*

reasons for Italy's claim to the lands of Andreas Hofer and the Tyrolese patriots were purely strategic, and the historical and other arguments officially advanced in support of the claim were obviously weak."⁴²

A territory, the Alps, that took on military values, both defensive and offensive. The “irregularities”, as Ascoli and Russo define them, of mountain terrain are, from a military point of view, handholds and springboards upon which it is was possible to built up tactical movements: the outlining of a good frontier, in function of an easy defence, should keep it in mind.

*“Indispensabile allora adottare sistemi in grado di fornire la massima protezione con la minima spesa, antitetiche esigenze sempre difficilmente conciliabili [...]. Scendendo in dettaglio quanto rimarcato implicò il maggior ricorso all'inserimento nei tracciati difensivi degli ostacoli naturali, quali corsi di fiumi, catene montane, e coste marittime, altrettanti amplificatori dell'impianto fortificatorio [...], anche a costo di far retrocedere la linea di frontiera. Più accortamente sarebbe preferibile parlare di «disomogeneità» morfologiche naturali, piuttosto che di ostacoli, rivelandosi invariabilmente la predette i veri fattori di rallentamento e di diluizione degli attacchi incursivi. La perfetta padronanza difensiva di tali connotazioni, ed il loro succedersi lungo una linea difensiva ostativa, produsse in definitiva, quella che è stata definita «frontiera scientifica», ovvero un ponderato studio del tracciato della stessa onde contenerne al minimo gli oneri difensivi, in uomini e strutture.”*⁴³

The “Terre Irredente” and the Alps that contains them, gains the double function of completing the ethnic and geographic unification and, for their topographic characteristics, of effective defence of Italian territorialization borders. In the common idea, Italian territorial borders should have reached specific locations, identified along terrain asperities, ridges, valleys or rivers, that could concur to an effective defence of the State and that, conveniently fortified, act as deterrent to invasion attempts.⁴⁴ This is the idea behind the so-called “strategic border”: a frontier already interpreted for

42 Johson, quoted, pag. 492-6

43 Ascoli, Russo, quoted, pagg. 47-8: “It is indispensable, therefore, to adopt all those systems able to give maximum protection with minimal expenses, antithetical needs hardly conciliable [...]. Going more to the detail, what have already been said imply that the army resort, more and more, to integrate defensive lines with natural obstacles like rivers, mountain ridges and coastal lines, as amplifier of the artificial defensive system [...], even if the frontier had to be withdraw. More precisely should have been spoken of natural morphological «irregularities», rather than obstacles, revealing the firsts the true factors of enemy attack slowdown. The perfect mastering of these features, and their ensuing inside a defensive line, eventually created what have been defined as «scientific frontier», in other words a reasoned study of the line so to limit defensive expenses, of men and structures.”

44 Idem, pag. 31: “And like the sea for the protection of the coastline, also the arduous alpine diaphragm impeded the

military operations and upon which the army will implement its territorial project. A project implemented in function of national identity and aspirations, international relations and those terrain features useful from a military point of view.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Inevitably the presence of two powerful European States, France and Austria-Hungary, that shared with Italy the frontiers along the Alps inferred that the military value given to those mountains was partly caused by a matter of international relations.

“La difesa esterna poneva gravi problemi, di natura geografica e politica. La vulnerabilità di migliaia di km di coste indifese andava di pari passo con frontiere terrestri difficili da difendere e attraverso le quali era poco pratico lanciare un attacco. La maggior parte delle principali città era alla portata di potenziali nemici. Dal lato continentale l’Italia aveva di fronte due grandi potenze; sul mare ne fronteggiava tre.”⁴⁵

The extent of the areas to defend and the impossibility of an effective coverage for all of them with the troops available, made it necessary to identify some more probable theatres of war, found both for geographical and international relations reasons.⁴⁶

direct contact with neighbouring nations. But both the first and the second could not be believed impassable being countless the occasions, during history, of invasion after their pass. At most both can guarantee a favourable natural obstacle, maybe susceptible of being integrated with human-made obstacles, so to reach the supposed inviolability.”

45 Gooch John, *Esercito, Stato e Società in Italia, 1870-1915*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1994, pag. 235: *“The defence from external threats set serious problems of geographic and political nature. The vulnerability of kilometres of undefended coastlines went hand in hand with terrestrial frontiers difficult to protect and where an attack was uneasy to be launched. Most of the major cities can be easily reached by an eventual enemy. In the continent Italy was facing two big powers; on the sea, three.”*

46 Bertinara, *Lo stanziamento dell’Esercito Italiano*, in AA.VV., *Esercito e città dall’Unità agli anni Trenta: atti del Convegno di studi – Perugia 11-14 maggio 1988*, Roma, Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1989, pag. 11-12: *“The Commission [of 1880 for national defence] studied the different theatres of operation where fights may have taken place: a north-eastern theatre, a north-western one, the Ionic and Adriatic coastline, the southern and islands theatre, the internal defence of the north-western theatre. [...] A first distinction was based between a continental theatre, where more probably major battles were to take place, and a mainland one far less important; it was feared however that Tyrrhenian coast, and particularly Rome, Naples plain and the Arno valley could be target of a French landing; to avoid this eventuality, several initiatives were proposed among which is the famous fortification plan for the capital city. The defence of the continental theatre was, anyway, the one receiving most of the attentions: it was conceived as put over a series of natural obstacles, possibly reinforced by fortification on the east and on the west. Moreover, with time passing by, the role of the Alps grew not only as simply slowdown of a possible invasion, but as a true theatre of operations, where Italian troops could face more profitably a possible attack. Passed the Alps on the West and the Piave river on the East, the main defensive line should have been the one made on the Piave-Adige rivers on the East and the Casale-Alessandria ridge on the West, as foreword lines. The Commission then found Bologna as the centre of the Apennines defence and the linchpin of the entire system.*

*“Nel periodo 1873-74 il Corpo di Stato Maggiore aveva messo allo studio una serie di ben 11 ipotesi di conflitto.”*⁴⁷

The recognition of the most probably direction of invasion, particularly from France or Austria-Hungary, was necessary to achieve the most effective deployment of the army over the national territory.⁴⁸ The army should have been able to implement its territorialization quickly and efficaciously, to guarantee the best protection of the State. It was necessary therefore to recognize in advance the possible operation theatres, so the army could have been able to take advantage of the “irregularities” of the ground there located.

The situation at the end of Nineteenth century was seeing, after nearly thirty years of enmity, a reconciliation between Italy and France and, on the other side, a cooling of relations with Austria-Hungary, despite both were part of Triple Alliance.

“Nel 1897 lo Stato Maggiore Imperiale austro-ungarico cominciò ad interessarsi nuovamente al teatro di guerra italiano. Questo interesse si concretizzò in una serie di lavori che furono ben presto notati delle autorità italiane.

*[...] In quello stesso 1902 l'Italia non solo rinnovò il trattato della Triplice Alleanza, ma sottoscrisse anche un accordo con la Francia. Il riavvicinamento italo-francese era in pieno corso e ad esso si accompagnava un progressivo allontanamento dall'Austria. [...] L'attenzione dei comandanti militari italiani si stava concentrando verso il confine orientale, «In vista della particolare attività esplicata dall'Austria-Ungheria nella zona di confine con l'Italia.»*⁴⁹

Genoa, La Spezia, Rome, Capua, Messina, Taranto and Venice should become autonomous strongholds, each properly fortified.”

47 Mazzetti Massimo, *Dagli eserciti pre-unitari all'Esercito Italiano*, in AA.VV., *L'Esercito Italiano dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra (1861-1918)*, Roma, Ufficio Storico SME, 1980, pag. 163: “*In the period 1873-74 the General Staff studied 11 hypothesis of conflict.*”

48 Bertinara, quoted, pag. 15: “*We have therefore tried to identify the various reasons of deployment of army troops over the national territory, and we arrive to recognize three main causes of internal and external politics. The first one, influenced by the foreign policy of the government – subscription to the Triple Alliance – defined the deployment of the armies over the territory.*”

49 Idem, pagg. 68-69: “*In 1897 Austria-Hungary General Staff began to look again at the Italian theatre of operations. This interest was put in practice through a series of work that were noted by Italian authorities. [...] In that same year of 1902 Italy not only renewed the triple Alliance but subscribed also an agreement with France. The French-Italian reconciliation was in full run and was going together with a separation from Austria. [...] The attention of Italian military commanders was focusing more and more on the eastern frontier, «As consequence of the particular activity carried out by Austria-Hungary along the border with Italy.»*”; Boria, quoted, pag. 43: “*In Italy [...] the “irredentismo” movement reached its highest expression and consensus after Crispi's government fall (1896), when*

Relations between Rome and Vienna were destined to get worse, since the untired Italian claims over the “Terre Irredente” under Austrian control. As consequence the plans of State defence and deployment of the army were renewed and oriented towards the eastern frontier, in preparation of a conflict against the “historical” enemy.

THE ARMY AND THE REPRESENTATION MODALITIES

Since the early years of the Twentieth century was clear that the theatre of a conflict against a neighbouring State would have been more likely the eastern frontier. So the army can start implement its territorial project, locating those features of the operation areas that may influence, positively or negatively, troops manoeuvres.

*“To the fullest appreciation of the important influence of topography on modern warfare two things are fundamentally essential [...]. The first is a reasonably accurate mental image of each battlefield, a picture of the salient features of the terrain which might be expected to influence the disposition and movements of armies. The second is a record of the military operations on each battlefield presented, not in usual terms of advances or retreats to this or that line of villages and towns, but in terms of the plateau scarps, ridge crests, valley trenches, marsh barriers, and other topographic features which obviously affected the fighting and its results.”*⁵⁰

Hereafter the army point of view will be analysed, in other words which meaning it appointed to the theatre of operations and how it was represented, both ideally and materially through maps.

“Mentre l’Austria era in possesso del Trentino da tempo lunghissimo e perciò da lunga mano erasi preparata a difenderlo anche dal lato dell’Italia, non fu lo stesso da parte nostra. Raggiunto l’attuale confine, nel 1866, l’Italia per fortificarlo si trovò di fronte ad un problema affatto nuovo, per il quale nulla era stato preparato, neppure quegli studi e quella conoscenza del terreno, senza dei quali non è possibile addivenire a proposte concrete ed

Italy's foreign policy turned decisively whit the softening of the rigid pro-German policy that characterized the previous period. As consequence of some specific events, like the annexation of Bosnia-Erzegovina declared by Vienna in 1908, foreign political relations with Austria-Hungary cooled severely. The unrest showed itself with [...] the rekindle of old claims over the regions of Trentino and Venezia-Giulia.”

50 Johnson, quoted, pagg. XVIII-XIX

The first step the army had to do was to gain a good knowledge of the north-eastern frontier, through the recognition and identification of all those terrain “irregularities” that could be used for an effective defence.

The identification of the ground features strategically relevant began already at the highest level, in other words the National Defence Plan. Many of them have been designed before the war, as a result of international relations and the most probable army theatre of operations, as already seen. Since 1880, with Pianell's plan, it was planned that, in case of war against Austria-Hungary, the army should have been deployed along the major north-eastern rivers, Adige, Piave and Tagliamento, and on the mountains bordering Trentino to protect the flank of the array.

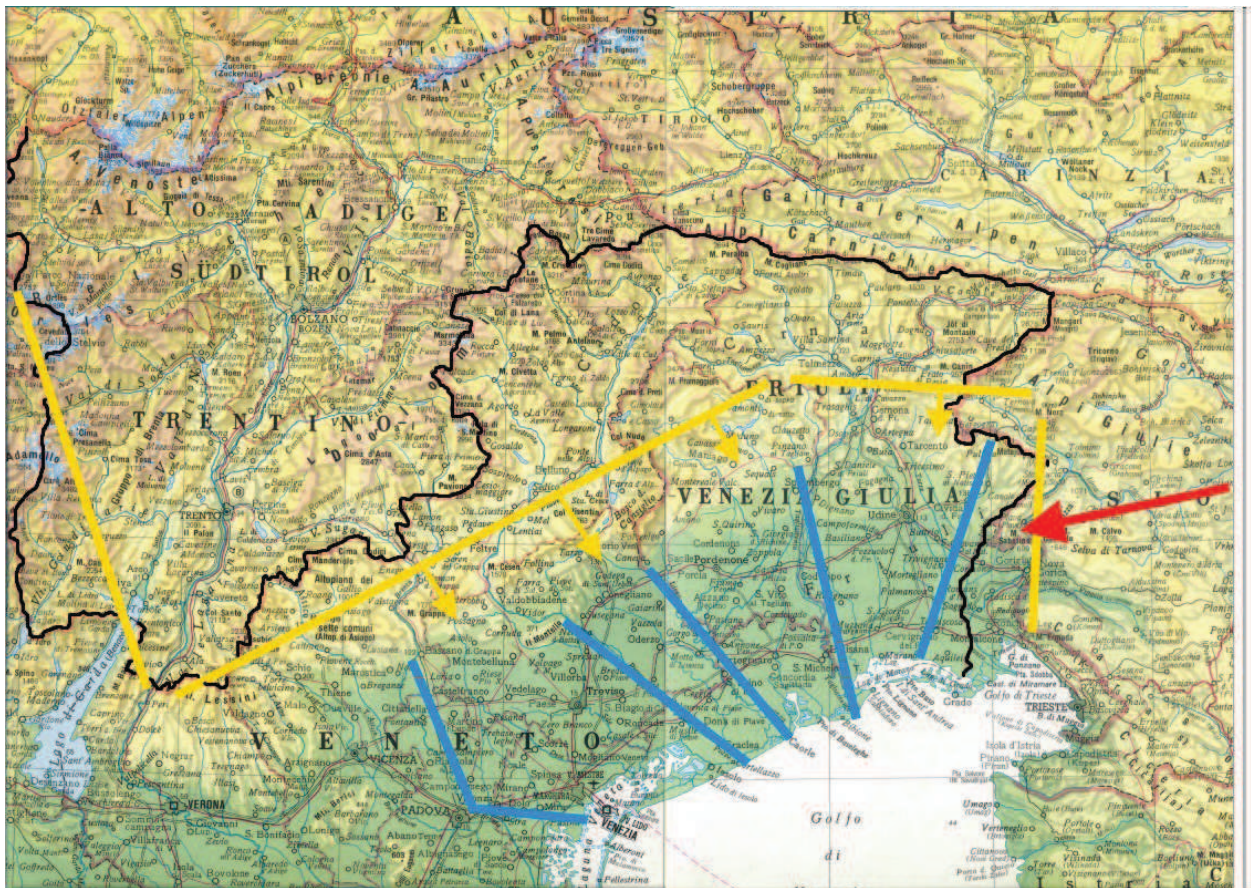


Image 4 Map of north-eastern Italy. Yellow lines represent the army mountain deployment line, the blue ones the main rivers flowing through the Venetian plain, the red one the direction of Austro-Hungarian attacks. From a military point of view rivers were obstacles upon which built the defensive line in case of invasion; in this eventuality troops deployed on the mountains were suppose to cover the deployment flank and attack the enemy one.

51 Mazzetti, quoted, pag. 161: “While Austria had the possession of Trentino since very long time – and so was highly prepared to defend it also from Italian attacks – it was not the same for us. Reached the actual border on 1866, Italy found a huge new problem, with nothing prepared to face it, lacking those studies and terrain knowledge that impeded the formulation of consistent and organic proposals.”

*“Should Italy’s eastern defences be breached, the natural defensive lines which would remain to the Italian armies on that front are the rivers traversing the gently sloping Piedmont plain from the mountains to the sea. After the Isonzo the Tagliamento, then the Livenza, Piave, Brenta, Bacchiglione, Adige, and finally the Po, in succession offer natural obstacles of no mean value at which enemy pursuit might be checked. [...] It will be observed that every one of these defensive lines rested its right upon the coastal marshes and the sea, its left upon the Alps. The battlefield of the Trentino thus became the critical field of operations, upon the successful defence of which the safety of the Italian armies depend. Should the mountain barrier be breached, the defensive lines in question would be taken in the flank and rear.”*⁵²

Therefore it is visible, observing the principles of the “strategic frontier”, how some of the terrain “irregularities” were integrated into the defensive plans, so to facilitate military operations.

The mountain theatre, in this case, gained a specific role in the national defensive plans: flank of the deployment, it was a secure hindrance to flanking manoeuvres.

However, a closer look to the Italian sector of the Alps reveal how they weren't such a good defensive element. The scarce adherence between territorial representation and reality was one of the major deficiencies of the national defensive plans: therefore the necessity of an effective recognition, identification and transposition of the terrain “irregularities” inside maps.

“L’attaccatura continentale della penisola è vistosamente marcata dal maestoso corrugamento delle Alpi. Non molto antiche, geologicamente parlando, tradiscono tutte le asperità proprie dei rilievi giovani che ne costituiscono, per molti versi, altrettante peculiarità militari. In linea di larga massima possono dividersi in tre sezioni fondamentali, ovvero occidentali, centrali ed orientali.

Le caratteristiche morfologiche non risultano affatto assolutamente omogenee, dettaglio che influenzò non solo la dinamica storica che si svolse al loro riparo ma soprattutto la logica difensiva delle stesse. Sempre in generale, anche la pendenza degli opposti versanti appare notevolmente più ripida e scoscesa per quello interno italiano rispetto a quelli esterni, francesi, svizzeri ed austriaci, caratteristica che penalizzò l’opera di trasformarle in possente spalto naturale. [Di questo sistema montuoso] all’Italia toccò la frazione minoritaria, mai eccedente la terza parte, limitazione che ne compromise sensibilmente la facoltà di scelta sulle ubicazioni difensive da impiantarvi, e per conseguenza la validità complessiva della

52 Johson, quoted, pag. 502

loro protezione.”

“Quanto affermato [...] affliggeva la pianificazione difensiva dell’arco alpino, come meglio in seguito approfondiremo: per ora è fondamentale ribadire questa non neutralità delle Alpi, in apparenza tanto favorevole poste a difesa dell’Italia, e la costantemente ribadita urgente esigenza di procedere a realizzazioni difensive assolutamente inedite per ubicazione e concezione.”⁵³

If, from one side, the mountains between Veneto and Trentino may seem a good protection, on the other they can become base for enemy attacks, using the advantageous higher position, constantly threatening Italian array from the rear.⁵⁴

The 1909 defensive plan, kept in mind these aspects, envisaged the deployment of the army on Carnia region, to force the border towards Toblach and to cut the Trentino salient, and along the Tagliamento river, to parry the Austrian advance from the Isonzo river.

“Le truppe italiane avrebbero dovuto attaccare Toblach, distaccando poi due corpi d’armata per tagliare la punta del Tirolo al vertice, investendo Franzenfeste, interrompendo la ferrovia al Brennero e occupando Bolzano, evitando in tal modo il ben fortificato saliente meridionale. Contemporaneamente allo svolgimento di queste manovre, il resto dell’esercito italiano avrebbe dovuto combattere sull’Isonzo.”⁵⁵

“Viene alla luce nel 1909 un nuovo piano di mobilitazione e radunata, impostato su di un

53 Ascoli and Russo, quoted, pagg. 37-8, 40, my underline: it's worth to note that the authors appoint a non-neutrality to the Alps, from a military point of view. “The junction to the continent is visibly characterize by the Alps. Not very old, from a geological point of view, they reveal all the asperities typical of young mountains which are, in many ways, as many military peculiarities. Roughly they can be divided in three main sections: western, central and eastern.

The morphological characteristics are definitely not homogeneous, detail that influenced not only the dynamic of history that happened under their protection but – most of all – the logic for their protection. Always in general terms, the slope on the two sides appears way more steep for the Italian one compared to the French, Swiss and Austrian ones, peculiarity that penalized the fortification activity. [Of this mountain system] Italy had the minor fraction, never exceeding the third part, limitation that compromised considerably the choice of where to locate the fortifications and – as consequence – the validity of their protection.”

“What said [...] afflicted the defensive planning of the Alps, as we'll see better later: for the moment it is important to underline this non-neutrality of the Alps, apparently so favourably located for Italy defence, and the constantly repeated urgency to create a fortified system absolutely unprecedented for position and design.”

54 Gooch, quoted, pag. 68: “Previously, in that same year [1880], became known that, from news from Vienna, a possible attack would be launched from the Isonzo river and that Tyrol would function just as lateral protection and deterrent to an Italian defensive counterattack.”

55 Idem, pag. 80: “Italian troops should have attacked Toblach, despatching then two army corps to cut the vertex of Tyrol salient, running over Franzenfeste, interrupting the railway at the Brennero pass and occupying Bolzano, thus avoiding the well fortified southern part of the salient. At the same time, the bigger part of the army should have fought on the Isonzo.”

arco di 23 giorni, che ha il suo principale riferimento in pianura nel Piave. [...] L'orientamento strategico italiana andava assumendo caratteristiche ben definite, sottendendo una specifica azione difensiva-controffensiva. Era previsto che allo scoppio delle ostilità le truppe di copertura occupassero posizioni chiave oltre confine ed ostacolassero non solo l'avanzata ma la radunata stessa del nemico. Il mantenimento del possesso della Carnia avrebbe costituito una vera spina nel fianco di un nemico proiettato verso l'aperta pianura friulana: se esso avesse attaccato sul Tagliamento, si sarebbe esposto ad un contrattacco italiano dal Cadore; se avesse mosso contro il Cadore, il suo ridotto sarebbe stato colpito dall'offensiva italiana, alimentata dalle teste di ponte sul Tagliamento."⁵⁶

These “key positions” of the Trentino theatre were represented by the watersheds between valleys and mountain passes: the main strategic advantage offered by the Alps was that every advancing movement have to pass through specific – and foreseeable – points and that troops columns have to be subdivided over different valleys, nullifying number superiority and getting troops coordination difficult.

“Fra i due sistemi, costiero oppure alpino, la Commissione decise di rafforzare il settore alpino perché, secondo Mezzacapo se si utilizzava il sistema costiero, «ci priverebbe del vantaggio offertoci dalla barriera alpina di poter lottare in favorevolissime condizioni contro le forze nemiche, le quali, in quel terreno, non potrebbero avvalersi della propria superiorità numerica. Del resto, vista la relativa ristrettezza e la conformazione del teatro di operazione [le valli alpine], il nostro esercito non potrebbe aspettare per entrare in azione che il nemico sbocchi da tutte le linee di invasione nel piano, senza correre il pericolo di trovarsi in posizione avviluppata. Ne deriva quindi la necessità di arrestare la marcia di talune colonne nemiche attraverso la zona montana per guadagnare spazio e tempo necessario a gettarsi con tutte le forze disponibili contro le colonne che fossero riuscite a sboccare»."⁵⁷

56 Ascoli and Russo, quoted, pag. 163: “On 1909 came out a new plan for mobilization and muster set over a period of 23 days, centred on the Piave river plain. [...] Italian strategic orientation was getting clearer, based upon a defensive-counteroffensive idea. It was planned that at the opening of the hostilities covering troops would occupy key positions over the border with the aim to impede enemy advance or even its muster. The possession of the Carnia would become a real thorn in the side of an enemy projected towards the Venetian plain: an attack on Tagliamento river would have exposed its flank to Italian counterattacks from the Cadore; a huge movement to the Cadore region would have led to an Italian offensive starting from the bridgeheads on the Tagliamento.”

57 Malatesta Leonardo, *La guerra dei forti*, Nordpress, Rodegno Saiano, 2003, pag. 24: “Between the two systems, the coastline or the mountains, the Commission decided to fortify the second because, in Mezzacapo's opinion, if the coastline would have been used «it would have deprived us from the advantage offered by the alpine barrier to fight on highly favourable positions against the enemy, that, in such terrain, would not have been able to use its number superiority. After all, saw the relatively narrowness and the conformation of the operation theatre [i.e. alpine

Both in the case of attack or defence, Italians should had to get inside the valleys to occupy the dominant watersheds and passes: the possession of these point would have enable the troops to foresee direction and size of the enemy. Furthermore higher positions would have permitted a better view over enemy movements and have forced them to a harder effort than if they were in the plain fields.⁵⁸ Eventually, specific artillery pieces and techniques would have been necessary for the mountain theatre like howitzers and indirect fire.

“[...] lo sbarramento efficace delle valli contro un nemico che le discenda non può aversi, se non fortificando le origini delle valli stesse, colà dove esiste il passo montano più elevato che attraversa la cresta dorsale della catena, dove la natura ha accumulato i suoi ostacoli più potenti che restringono il passo e ne impediscono l’aggiramento; e dove infine il clima più rigido per la rilevante elevazione sul livello del mare accumula pure altri ostacoli di nevi e ghiacci e di bassissime temperature, i quali impediscono al nemico di stazionare e fermarsi a lungo ed allo scoperto nelle vicinanze delle fortificazioni che quivi venissero erette. [...] Chi discende una valle ha costantemente il vantaggio del dominio sopra chi la difende nel basso, o lungo il suo percorso.”⁵⁹

We have seen therefore how, of all the characteristics that can be found in the terrain “irregularities”, the army takes in consideration only some of them, and appoints them a specific meaning, based upon strategic usefulness: it will be upon these elements that the army, as soon as the war brake out, implement and fasten its territorialization.

CARTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION AND DENOMINATION

Once performed the cognitive appropriation of those topographic elements useful for his territorial project, the army, to organize and be able to communicate it, have to create maps.

valleys], our army should not wait to take action that all the enemy troops get out of the valleys, without the risk of being surrounded. So it is mandatory to stop the advance of some enemy columns in the mountain zone to gain time and space necessary to run with full force over those columns that had been able to get out.» Gooch, quoted, pag. 53

58 Johnson, quoted, pagg. 503-504

59 Ascoli and Russo, quoted, pag. 39: “[...] the effective blockade of the valleys against an advancing enemy is obtainable only by fortifying the same valleys, where there is the highest pass that cross trough the ridge, where Nature has assembled its strongest obstacles that narrow the passage and impede any bypass; and eventually where the weather is more freezing because of the altitude, and ice and snow and low temperatures avoid the enemy to stop for a long time and without cover, close to the fortifications here possibly created. [...] The one descending a valley will always have the advantage of altitude against the one who's defending it from the bottom or along it course.”

Since the Unification, Italy demanded the task of mapping the territory and the production of maps, both military and civilian, to the *Istituto Geografico Militare* (Army Geographic Institute) in Florence.

*“Le carte militari, si sa, possono essere decisive nello svolgimento di un conflitto, in quanto il contendente che dispone della cartografia più affidabile conosce meglio il territorio e quindi si trova in una condizione di vantaggio tattico nella preparazione strategica dello scontro.”*⁶⁰

The representation of reality inside maps is limited and restricted to the necessity of the producer and what is showed are just some of the features of the terrain, those that interest the map creator.

*“Per rappresentare rapporti densi di significato in un mondo tridimensionale su un foglio di carta o su uno schermo video, una mappa deve distorcere la realtà. In quanto modello in scala, la carta deve impiegare simboli che quasi sempre sono proporzionalmente molto più grandi o spessi delle forme che rappresentano. Per evitare di nascondere informazioni decisive in una nebbia di dettagli, la mappa deve offrire una veduta sulla realtà che sia selettiva, incompleta. Non si sfugge al paradosso cartografico: per presentare un’immagine utile e veritiera, una mappa accurata deve raccontare bugie pure.”*⁶¹

What is represented is, therefore, the territorial project of the producer: through his maps we are able to better understand him, his point of view and projects.

*“Perché le carte non sono rappresentazioni utili unicamente a facilitare l’orientamento o identificare la posizione di un luogo; sono anche, e forse soprattutto, oggetti che «invitano a vedere e a pensare ciò che non si vede né si pensa quando si osserva lo spazio reale», consentendo così «di vedere cose altrimenti invisibili». Le carte, dunque, sono in grado di illustrare un punto di vista, veicolare un messaggio.”*⁶²

60 Boria, quoted, pag. 109: “Military maps, is known, can be decisive during a conflict, as the contender who has the more reliable map knows better the ground and find himself therefore in an advantageous position in planning the action.”

61 Idem, pag. 7: “To represent the dense relations of a three-dimensional world on a map or a TV screen, maps have to distort reality. As a scale-model, maps have always to use symbols that are often draw bigger than what they truly represent. To avoid hiding some decisive information in a cloud of details, maps must offer a view over reality that is selective and thus incomplete. It's impossible to avoid the cartographic paradox: to present an useful and true picture, an accurate map have to tell lies.”

62 Boria, quoted, pag. 13: “Because maps are useful not only to ease orientation or identify a spot; their are also, and maybe especially, objects that «invite to see and think what cannot be seen or thought observing the real space»,

The real terrain, as seen by the army, is limited to those elements that influence manoeuvres and fight of troops: map therefore tend to represent only those terrain “irregularities” that have relevant military characteristics, like wide rivers, swamps, any ground elevation, buildings and towns, street , etc.⁶³

“In legenda [alle carte al 25.000] era minuziosamente indicata la casistica stradale con un’attenta classifica, che andava dalla «via maestra» con fondo artificiale sempre carrozzabile fino alla «mulattiera atta al transito a soma», al tratturo, al sentiero facile o difficile; un lungo elenco per le essenze dei boschi e dei frutteti, per poterne individuare le potenzialità di copertura e le difficoltà di attraversamento; una dettagliata distinzione per i particolari indicanti le possibilità di approvvigionamento idrico, come sorgenti, fontane, «perenni» o «non perenni», e pozzi «con aeromotore», «con noria», oppure artesiani, e così

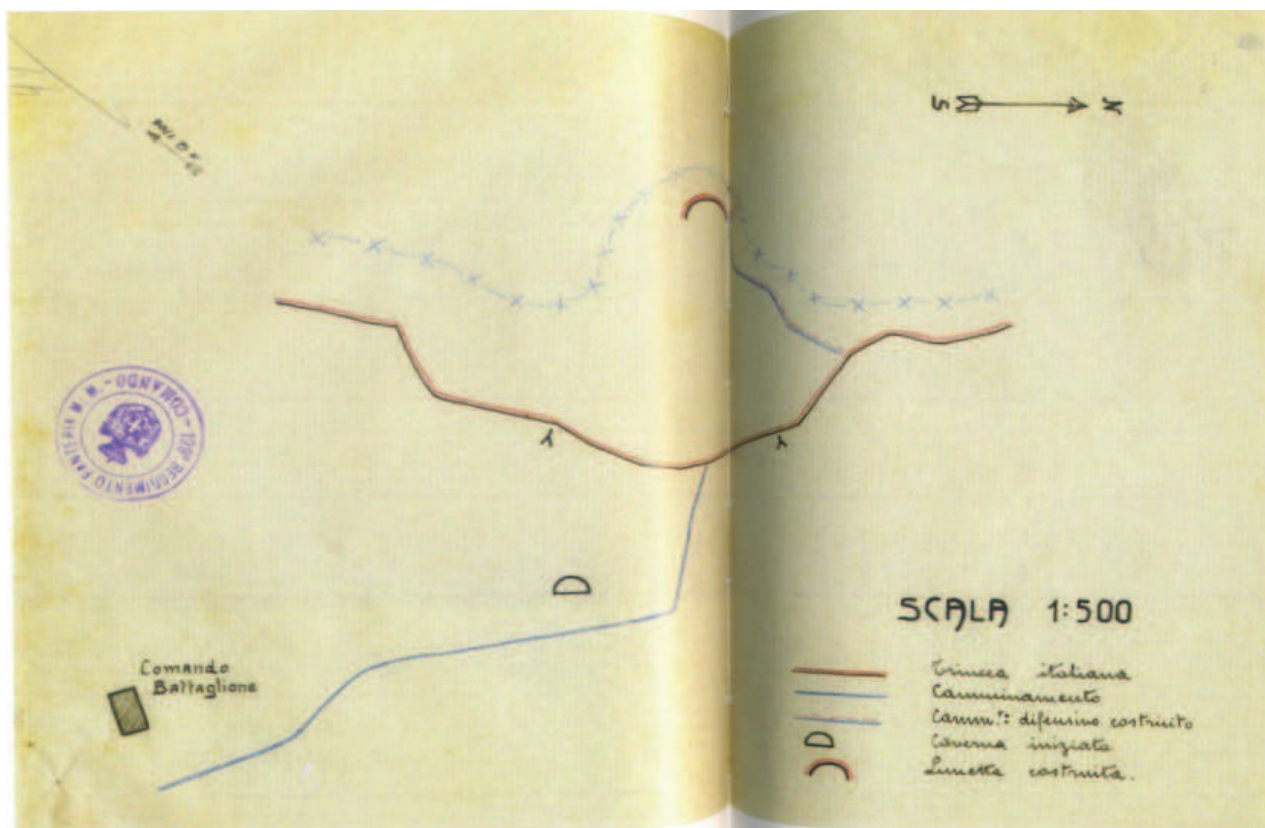


Image 5 Sketch representing trench lines near the underground mine of Monte Zebio, on Asiago Plateau, 1917. Note the scarcity of elements represented and very high scale of representation, [Giorgio Seccia, *Monte Zebio: dalla Strafexpedition alla vittoria finale, 1916-1918*, Chiari, Nordpress, 2007, pagg. 312-313]

allowing thus «to see things otherwise invisible». Maps, therefore, are able to show a point of view, to convey a message.”; see also Vaccari Alessandra, *L’immagine della Grande Guerra in Italia*, in *La Cartografia*, Periodico di informazione cartografica, n.° 17, Giugno 2008, pagg. 8-9: “So the importance of terrain knowledge and of man on the territory is always a main element of interest and study to confront at best military operations.”

63 Boria, quoted, pag. 110: “During conflicts maps are used to visualize contending troops on the terrain and the topographic elements of the terrain.”

via. La minuziosità e l'attenzione con cui erano disegnati gli elementi rilevanti sul terreno rispondevano proprio alle esigenze di un uso militare della carta. [...] Particolare importanza era data a tutti quegli elementi divisori delle proprietà rurali che potevano costituire un «ostacolo insuperabile per la cavalleria ed un grave impaccio per la fanteria ed artiglieria», come muretti, staccionate, sieponi alti, reticolati di fili di ferro, ecc.»⁶⁴

War required a very minute knowledge of the terrain and therefore maps were produced always with a major scale, of whom the ones 1:25000 are the most famous and still in use. In some particular cases, for actions against small advanced posts or trench segments, scale up to 1:500 where used.

“[...] i fogli al 100.000 e le tavolette al 25.000 erano ritenute «... non totalmente rispondenti alle esigenze della impreveduta situazione, poiché le dette scale non consentono la rappresentazione grafica di quei minuti particolari, che se possono considerarsi topograficamente trascurabili, assumono per contro un importante valore tattico nella guerra di posizione.»⁶⁵

Finally, the denomination process, aiming to identify univocally the “irregularities” useful for the army, on the national level planning the use was to reuse existing names; in case of foreign localities, the names were modified “using that Italian writing than the most keep the phonetic of the name”⁶⁶. In the following picture there is an example of military denomination: here are represented the fortifications along the north-eastern frontier and their subdivision in “fortified regions”. Note the scarcity of details: main rivers, streets, railways, cities, border location, fortifications position and how the German names in Südtirol are translated in Italian (except for Toblach). After all, for the needs of the producers, these elements were enough to convey his message.

64 Cristofari Alessandro, *Il Venticinquemila durante la Grande Guerra*, in *La Cartografia*, quoted, pagg. 35-37: “*In the legend [of maps with scale at 1:25,000] was indicated in minute detail road types with a wide range of cases, that ranged from the «main road» whit artificial ground to mule tracks, and easy or hard foot tracks; a long list of tree essences for woods and orchards, to be able to estimate coverage possibility and cross difficulties; a detailed distinction for those elements regarding water supply like springs, fountains «perennial» and «not perennial», wells with «engine», «noria» or «artesian» and so on. The elements identified on the terrain were draw with such attention and precision because they have to answer to a military use of the map. [...] Particular importance was given to all those dividing elements of land properties that can be an «impassable obstacle for cavalry troops and severe hindrance to foot troops and artillery», like stonewalls, fences, hurdles, barbed wires, etc.*”

65 Vaccari, quoted, pag. 13: “*Maps at 1:100000 and 1:25000 were considered «... not suitable to respond an unexpected situation, because those scales do not allow the representation of those minute details that, if topographically neglectable, gain huge tactical importance in the war of position.»*”

66 Idem, pag. 14

Difese permanenti italiane ed austriache sulla linea del vecchio confine.

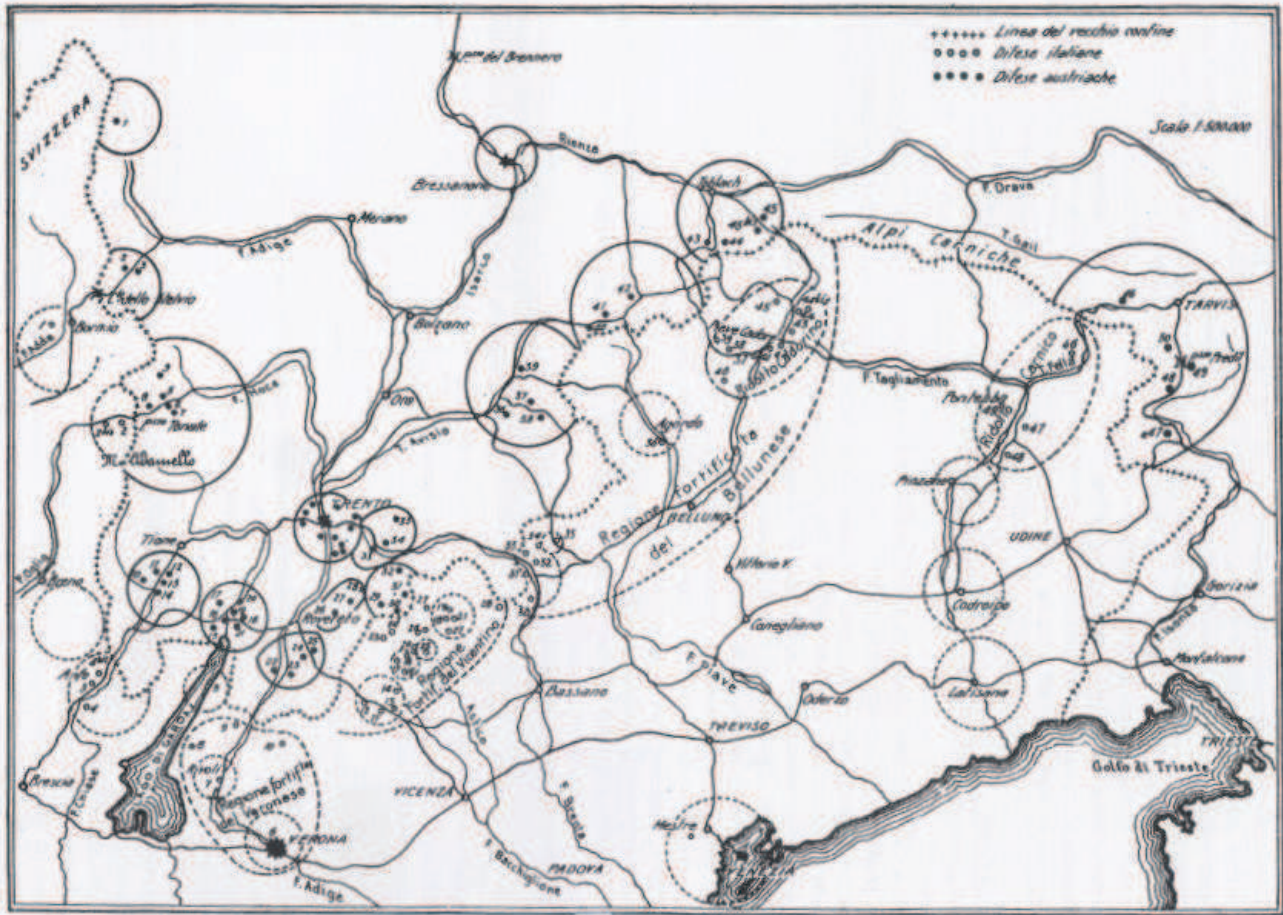


Image 6 The map represent the fortifications position along the border between Italy and Austria-Hungary: the elements reported are functional to the needs of the producer.

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL TERRITORIALIZATION

In the previous chapter we have seen how the location of the border between Italy and neighbouring States depends on national aspirations and strategic needs. The latter, particularly, tend to, where possible, take advantage of those terrain “irregularities” important from a military point of view. Furthermore we have seen how the National Defence Plans were oriented to north-east, considering a possible war against Austria-Hungary: south-eastern Alps, therefore, seen as a barrier and an obstacle against an invasion, were at the centre of General Staff attention as one of the most probable theatre of war.

A “barrier” that had, however, some leaks, from a military point of view, in correspondence of the mountain passes and some other particular places: these were, for example, the plateaus of Folgaria, Lavarone, Tonezza and Asiago between the Italian province of Vicenza and the Austro-Hungarian one of Trento. Their orographic conformation make them suitable for small-scale incursions that may have disturbed the main Italian deployment on the Isonzo: in fact they are characterized by a limited altitude in respect of the surrounding Alpine ridges (the highest crossable pass is at 1402 m. over medium sea level) and link valleys relatively short, precisely Astico and Brenta.

“These were dangerous gateways from Austria into Italy [...] It was the Italian position on the Monte Baldo-Pasubio-Grappa mountain barrier which protected the Piedmont plain to the south from invasion during the World War.”⁶⁷

Italian interest over this region showed itself since early 20th century with some recognition journeys of the General Staff and the construction of several fortifications, meant to control the passes and valleys linking Trento and Vicenza.

It's at this elements that we can connect the beginning of military territorialization of the Italian piedmont. A territorialization that existed, for the pre-war period, together with the the traditional one that will be described in this chapter, focusing on Asiago Plateau. The analysis categories already adopted will be used, in other words legitimacy, representation modalities and projects of the community living on the Plateau.

67 Johnson, quoted, pag. 516



Image 7 Physical map of the Plateau, subdivided in “microareas”. The central plain (Altopiano centrale) is located below the altitude of 1200 meters, with a medium altitude of 1021 meters. [Rigoni and Varotto, quoted, pag. 27]

Asiago Plateau is a portion of Venetian Prealps extended for 600 km² between the provinces of Vicenza and Trento. It's roughly square shaped and it's delimited by steep valleys on three sides: North by the Val Sugana, East by Canale di Brenta and West by Val di Centa and Val d'Astico. On the southern part it dips down the plain through the hilly landscape of Breganze and Marostica.

The Plateau is composed of a crown of mountain ridges that on the East, North and West reach the altitude of 2000 m (Mounts Verena, Spitz Vezzena, Mandriolo, Portule, Dodici, Ortigara, Castelloni di San Marco, Melette di Gallio e Foza), while on the southern part the maximum altitude don't exceed 1500 m (Mounts Cengio, Paù, Foraoro, Fonte, Corno, Bertiaga, Montagna Nuova); in the centre there is an hollow where most of the villages of the Plateau are located: Rotzo, Roana, Cesuna, Asiago, Gallio, Foza and Lusiana. Together they formed the Reggenza dei Sette Comuni (Regency of the Seven Municipalities) that administrated this territory for five centuries (XIV-XIX). The complex is grooved by several valleys: on the northern part they follow a North-to-South direction, from the mountains facing the Valsugana to the central hollow, creating numerous ridges (Valleys of Portule, Galmarara, Nos and Campomulo); similarly on the southern part they follow the same direction but with less deepness (Valleys of Magnaboschi, Barental, Granezza, Camporossignolo). Moreover, the central hollow is grooved by two creeks: Assa, which divides the villages of Roana and Rotzo from the others, and Gelpach, that starts North of Gallio and goes through all the plain until Canove, where it meets the Assa; finally the deep Val Frenzela begins near Gallio and dips down to Valstagna, dividing the villages of Gallio and Foza from the hamlets of Stoccareddo and Sasso.

Visited since Romans period⁶⁸, the Plateau saw a more durable settlement around the centuries XII-XIII, period when it came under the influence sphere of Vicenza and the diocese of Padova. At this time, in fact, goes back the firsts settlements firmly lived, like the Castelletto di Rotzo, Gallio (its foundation was promoted by the monastery of Saints Felice and Fortunato of Vicenza), Enego, Foza, Rotzo, Roana, Asiago and Lusiana. Since XV century the Plateau came under the domains of Venice that gave a strong impulse to systematic exploitation of the two main resources of the area: wood for shipbuilding industry and pastures for sheep farming and wool production. After the fall of Venice Republic in 1797, for all the XIX century several rulers changed over time – Austrians, French, Austrians again – until its definitive annexation to Italian Reign on 1866.

68 Bortolami Sante e Barbierato Paola, *Storia e geografia della colonizzazione germanica medievale*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pagg. 148: “*The general, still low demographic development degree; the abundant availability of pastures and wood in plain areas easily accessible; the distance from other villages, roads and river routes; the absolute meaningless of the site for the local authorities under a strategic and military point of view: these are all arguments, together with the complete absence of historical sources both written and archaeological, that reasonably allow us to believe that the Plateau was, for all the first millennium A.C., visited but not permanently inhabited.*”

The location near the frontier and the difficult accessibility made the Plateau a sort of linguistic and institutional island at the borders of Venetian Republic, with representative organs unique for the time.

*“Le tormentate vicende del secolo XIV avevano favorito e quasi imposto, nel piccolo mondo montanaro chiuso tra balze inaccessibili, una coscienza comunitaria molto accentuata, consolidando la originariamente semplice struttura organizzativa e dando vita ad una forma di governo di rappresentatività mediata, che si sarebbe consolidata e conservata nella Reggenza.”*⁶⁹

The Regency was ruled with the means of the direct democracy: decisional power was given to the “Colonnello” and to the reunions of the heads of the families.

*“Il Comune, di per sé, era costituito da una federazione di «colonnelli» (oggi diremmo frazione o quartieri) i quali avevano capacità giuridica e patrimoniale analoga a quella dell’attuale Comune. [...] Nel colonnello la sostanza del rapporto vicinale è ancora più evidente: si tratta della riunione dei capifamiglia di un piccolo borgo e delle case circostanti, il cui legame era rafforzato da rapporti di parentela. L’insieme delle assemblee vicinali dei colonnelli di un comune formavano la «General Convicinia», il massimo organo deliberante del comune federativo.”*⁷⁰

The Regency benefited from legislative autonomy, that allowed it to regulate all the areas of interest of the community, both civilian and administrative, and, since 1586, also military, enlisting a territorial militia for the defence of frontier passes, headed by a local man.⁷¹

The Plateau characterised itself also because of the keeping of a peculiar *jus in re* (real right) over

69 Cacciavillani Ivone, *L'autonomia dei Sette Comuni nel dominio della Serenissima*, in Stella Aldo, *Storia dell'Altopiano dei Sette Comuni*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1994, pagg. 449: “The roughs events of XIV century favoured or even imposed, in the little mountain world closed inside inaccessible slopes, a community conscience particularly accentuated, strengthening the original simple organizational structure and giving life to a form of government of mediated representation, that would become stronger and preserved under the Regency.”

70 Bortoli Giancarlo, *Il contratto sociale dei Sette Comuni: usi civici e proprietà collettive*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 476: “The commune, per se, was made up as a federation of «colonnelli» (today we would say hamlets or neighbourhood) that had legal and patrimonial power similar to the actual municipality. [...] In the colonello the neighbourhood relationship is even more evident: it is the reunion of the heads of the families of an hamlet and the surrounding houses, and its bonds were strengthened by kinship. The combination of colonnelli neighbourhood meetings of a municipality formed the «General Circonvicinia», highest deliberative authority of the federated municipality.”

71 Cacciavillani, quoted, pagg. 450-1

most of the woods and pastures: beside private propriety there was collective property, the so called “usi civici” (civic uses). The enjoyment modality of the latter was determined by the reunions of the heads of the families, who gave the land based upon each family needs.

*“Questo sistema sociale, economico e politico venne distrutto con l’avvento del dominio napoleonico, che il 29 giugno 1807 sciolse la Spettabile Reggenza dei Sette Comuni.”*⁷²

If political autonomy was destroyed and the Plateau came under State administration as every other municipality, the *usi civici* remained in use as tradition until nowadays.

The keeping of this peculiar institution, together with strict isolation and the traditional administrative freedom, widely influenced the representation modality of the Plateau community.

*“La posizione di «frontiera», il senso di appartenenza ad una «patria» alpina, la struttura federativa e ad alto tasso di autonomia, l’immagine di una «enclave» montanara fiera delle sue tradizioni di libertà e della sua lingua, [...] fra Sette e Ottocento catturò la curiosità di storici, etnografi, linguisti, tutti in diverso modo impegnati a discutere e chiarire la pretesa origine «cimbra» delle sue popolazioni e, comunque, la loro anomala posizione di vasta «isola» alloglotta tedesca eccezionalmente conservativa a sud di un Trentino «italiano».”*⁷³

More than anything, in fact, was the use of Cimbrian dialect to shape and isolate the community of the Plateau from the people of the plain below: introduced since XIII-XIV century by the German settlers called by the bishop of Trento Federico Wanga, with time it “got over the Romance-speaking substratum.”⁷⁴

The use of Cimbrian dialect is clearly visible in several names of locality still existing.

72 Bortoli, quoted, pag. 477: “This social, economic and political system was destroyed by the Napoleonic government, that on 29th June 1807 dissolved the Regency.”

73 Fontana Giovanni Luigi, *I Rossi, il CAI e l’Altopiano. Strategie e realizzazioni per l’integrazione montagnapianura*, in Stella, quoted, pag. 316: “The «frontier» position, the sense of belonging to an alpine «homeland», the federative structure and the high level of autonomy, the image of a mountain «enclave» proud of its tradition of freedom and language, [...] between Eighteen and Nineteen century caught the curiosity of historians, ethnographers, linguists, all busy in some way to discuss and clarify the alleged «Cimbrian» origin of its population and the anomalous location of this wide German-speaking «island» exceptionally preserved south of an «Italian-speaking» Trentino.”

74 Bortolami e Barbierato, quoted, pag. 162-168: “[...] We can think, historical sources at hand, that around mid-Thirteenth century a layer of German-speaking population was already present on the mountains of Vicenza, and in the surrounding ones, that was under the influence of an aristocracy clearly coordinated by the bishop of Trento; a population that had to live closely, maybe in the same village, with some «latins» and be – with them – under the rule of noblemen gravitating around Vicenza and sharply caught in a political game substantially Italian.”

*“Ma se tutti o quasi tutti i nomi dei comuni e delle varie frazioni o contrade dell’Altopiano risultano di origine precimbra, i microtoponimi o Flurnamen, ossia le denominazioni relative a singoli prati, campi, pascoli, sorgenti ecc., sono per lo più riconducibili alla presenza bavarese.”*⁷⁵

Only some of them will be subsequently analysed, being the Plateau rather wide and containing several toponyms. Among the referential denomination some names can be recollected like the classical di sopra/di sotto (upper/lower as in Bosco Lagonsin di sotto/di sopra near Marcesina; the hamlets of Rigoni, Holla, Piovega, and others), Coste di qua/di là (on this/other side) close to Enego, Campomezzavia (Midwayfield) located half of the way between Asiago and Rubbio, Mezzaselva (in Media Silva, Halfwood). Several others refer to terrain or soil characteristics as Bìse or Bìsele (field), Grabe (hollow, then in composite names like Bassagruba, Billegrube, Hintergruba), Laite (slope), Pach (creek, see the main one passing through Asiago, the Gelpach), Tal (valley, in Mittertal, Ràitertal, Sìchestal, Buderstal, Orgaltal), Raut (wood cleared area), Pozzetta secca (dry puddle), Pozza morta (dead puddle) and Pozza Viva (alive puddle) near Malga Pùsterle, Terre more di Boscosecco (Dark fields of Drywood), Bosco nero (Blackwood), Monte Tondo (Round mount), Cima Larici (Top of the Larches), Castelloni di San Marco (Castles of Saint Marc). Finally, numerous are the names of isolated houses or hamlets that refer to people names.

*“Le cavità naturali, i lochar, così frequenti nel territorio carsico dell’Altopiano, erano tutte legate a riferimenti immaginari, in genere di orrore, come il Tanzerloch (la cavità delle danze diaboliche), il Tagarloch (la cavità dei corvi), la Giacominarloch (cavità di Giacomina suicida per disperazione). Alcune località erano particolarmente cariche di riferimenti sacrali, come la Loitacubala, presso Canove, caverna di rifugio e di ritrovo della gente, l’Altarknotto presso Rotzo, l’antico scoglio a strapiombo sulla val d’Astico, legato a leggende di riti antichi pagani e di sacrifici umani, l’Odegar presso Asiago, altura che la memoria popolare, secondo Mario Rigoni Stern, collegava al culto di Odino, antica divinità germanica.”*⁷⁶

75 Barbierato Paola, *Il contributo della toponomastica alla storia degli insediamenti*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 178: “But if all or nearly all the names of villages and hamlets of the Plateau show a clear pre-Cimbrian origin, the micro-toponyms or Flurnamen, in other words those names related to pastures, fields, springs, etc. are for the most recalling the German presence.”

76 Bonato Sergio, *Il ciclo delle stagioni: miti e riti altopianesi*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 436: “Natural caves, the lochar, so frequent in the Karst-like topography of the Plateau, were all linked to the imaginary, usually of horror, like the Tanzerloch (cavity of diabolic dances), the Tagarloch (cave of the ravens), the Giacominarloch (Giacomina's cavity, dead for desperation). Some localities were particularly linked to sacred references, as the

To this symbolic denomination is possible to add some others, like Cima delle Contese (Top of the disputes), Colle dei Tre Confini (Hill of the three borders), Croce del Francese (Cross of the Frenchman), Lòngara (probably linked to the Hungarians invasions of X a.C.), Lazzaretto (leprosy hospital), Barenthal (Valley of the bear), Castelletto di Rotzo (Little Castle of Rotzo), Tòla del Vescovo (Bishop table, near Campolongo).

Finally, of the performative denomination is possible to list Buse Magre (Poor hollows), Val d'Antenne (Valley of antennas, where antenna means the ship mast), Campo delle Doghe (Field of the staves), Col di Remi (Hill of the oars), Spiazzi dei mercanti (Fields of the merchants, near Monte Erio).

The names of localities clearly show the predominant agricultural use of the land of the Plateau: the short period of vegetation growth prevented the development of an economy that was not of bare subsistence and so the creation of a strong central authority based on agricultural surplus. Consequently, the other mean of representation, maps, were always promoted by those external entities that had political control over the Plateau. Many maps has been created during the Republic of Venice, due to frequent border disputes between the people of the Plateau and the neighbouring people of the valleys (Grigno, Castel Ivano, Borgo, Beseno) over some fringe pastures of the Plateau.

“La cartografia specifica del territorio dei Sette Comuni si inquadra nella categoria delle carte delle regioni della Repubblica di Venezia, di cui il territorio stesso entra a far parte agli inizi del XV secolo. Le rappresentazioni hanno generalmente finalità pratica, cioè la conoscenza delle varie aree sotto profili diversi. I Sette Comuni rivestivano un interesse particolare perché, oltre ad essere area prevalentemente montuosa, isolata e difficile da raggiungere, erano anche terra di confine tra Veneto e Austria.”⁷⁷

These representations, often pictorial and not really responding to reality, got better with time, as improved topographic technology was developed: during XIX century, therefore, more detailed and

Loitacubala, near Canove, cavity for shelter and meetings, the Altarknotto, the old cliff over the Val d'Astico, linked to old pagan rituals and human sacrifices, the Odeggar near Asiago, hill that popular culture links to the worship of Odin, old German God.” It is to be noted that the religious nuances given both to the Altarknotto and the Odeggar are contested, since there aren't yet historical evidence to support such claims.

⁷⁷ Bevilacqua Eugenia, *L'Altipiano nella cartografia storica*, in Stella, quoted, pag. 371: *“The specific cartography of the Plateau is set in the category of the Republic of Venice regional maps, because the Plateau came under its control in the beginning of XV century. Representations usually had a practical purpose, in other words the knowledge of these areas under different points of view. The Seven Municipality had a particular interest because, other than be a mountainous area, isolated and difficult to reach, it was also a border area between Veneto and Austria.”*

realistic maps of the Plateau were drawn, now promoted not by public authorities but by the army.⁷⁸ Analysing now the territorial project of the Plateau inhabitants, it is possible to notice it consists of the exploitation of local woods and pastures and, since the beginning of the XX century, of their protection. To do so, laws (the *usi civici*) and structures were implemented. To study the latter the analysis categories proposed by Turco will be used again, as divided in for housing, for production and of legitimacy. Structures for housing are those “geographic formations intended for living and stay (both fixed and mobile) of communities big or small.”⁷⁹

The villages of the Plateau are located in the central plain, where the even terrain eased cultivation, farming and movements of people and goods. Houses had a “building specificity” already noticed by Caldogno in his volume of 1598⁸⁰, which defines them “of German style”:

“Il tipo edilizio ad uso permanente più diffuso è una declinazione particolare della «casa di pendio» prealpina, caratterizzata (pur nelle sue numerose varianti locali) da alcuni elementi comuni: l’equilibrato uso di pietra e legno, con pareti in pietra calcarea e tetto in legno a forma piramidale a forte pendenza, più o meno smussato ai vertici dei due pioventi (smussatura «alla tedesca») e copertura in scandole o paglia di segale. [...] Tale dimora accoglieva sotto lo stesso tetto abitazione e rustico, con una particolarità legata allo spazio superiore della dilla: più che un fienile (teza), una vera e propria aia interna, cui si accedeva con i carri dal pendio mediante una grande apertura (tor) retrostante all’abitazione.”⁸¹

The seasonal structures (the “malga”⁸²) are distributed over the main pastures of southern and northern areas, where low temperatures and difficult terrain avoid a stable living.

Production structures were intended for manufacturing and goods production; in this category

78 Idem, pag. 381

79 Turco, quoted, pag. 127

80 Caldogno Francesco, *Relazione delle Alpi Vicentine e de’ passi e popoli loro*, Padova, 1598.

81 Varotto Mauro, *La casa “villereccia” altopianese e le sue trasformazioni*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 414: “The most common permanent housing building is a particular declination of the “house of prealpine slope”, characterised (even in its numerous variants) by some common elements: the well-balanced use of stone and wood, with calcareous stone walls and steep pyramid-shape wooden roof, with more or less blunted slopes (German blunt) and covering made of stone slices or rye straws. [...] Such house accommodated under the same roof house and farm buildings, with a peculiarity linked to the upper part of the dilla: more than a hayloft (teza), a real farmyard, accessible by the mountain slope through a big entrance (tor) behind the building.”

82 Rigoni Stern Gianbattista, *Le malghe dell’Altopiano*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 286: “In economical terms the malga is a farm with a zootechnical address, temporary since it works only during a limited period of the year that last between 90 and 120 days. It consists of a pasture of variable dimensions, of service infrastructures, like the casara [dairymaid], stables, ponds, enclosure and a herd of cows. The malga is led by a farmer called «malghese» that usually is also the dairyman and that is helped in his job by shepherds. This is the «malga system» with his rules made up through centuries of experience, that allows a sustainable exploitation over time of the high pastures.”

category are also included streets, as a necessary mean to people and goods movement.

*“L’economia dell’Altopiano si reggeva dunque sull’interscambio con le valli e il pedemonte. Il territorio era segnato dalla rete di mulattiere e sentieri che, attraverso solchi profondi e pendii un tempo costellati di fortificazioni, s’innalzavano alla montagna tra boschi d’abete, di larice e faggio. Erano gli antichi tratturi delle transumanze e dei traffici di lana con i centri lanieri del pedemonte, i sentieri che dal piano salivano ai pascoli delle malghe, dalle quali poi il formaggio lavorato ridiscendeva a dorso di mulo fino a Caltrano; la strada della Val d’Assa e i percorsi dell’alta valle dell’Astico lungo i quali transitava il legname dei Sette Comuni destinato alle segherie di Arsiero, mentre quello delle pendici meridionali affluiva alle segherie della Rozzola di Chiuppano.”*⁸³

The main structures for goods production were the casare for milk and cheese production, sawmills and mills for timber, flour and leather. The lack of permanent creeks with sufficient flow rate and good roads prevented the creation of production structures better developed: most of the manufactures, like straw binding for hats and baskets, were done inside the houses during winter time.⁸⁴

The isolation of the Plateau was mostly due to the steep slopes towards the plain below that prevented the construction of good roads to reach the Plateau itself.

“All’epoca in cui pubblicava la sua guida [Ottone Brentari, Guida storico-alpina di Bassano e Sette Comuni. Guida illustrata, Bassano, 1885], di tutte le strade descritte una sola, «quella da Mosson ad Asiago, è carrozzabile in tutto il suo percorso; e tutte le altre sono o parte carrozzabili e parte mulattiere, o del tutto mulattiere». La strada provinciale del Costo (36 km), la prima carrozzabile per l’Altipiano iniziata nel 1845, sospesa nel ’48, e ripresa nel 1851, era stata aperta nel 1854. In precedenza, i 18.000 abitanti dell’altipiano di Asiago erano collegati alla pianura dall’antica mulattiera poi carrareccia che permetteva di

83 Fontana Giovanni Luigi, *I Rossi, il CAI e l’Altipiano. Strategie e realizzazioni per l’integrazione montagna-pianura*, in Stella, quoted, pag. 318: “The economy of the Plateau was based upon the exchange of goods with the valleys and the piedmont. The territory was marked by a net of mule and foot tracks that, through deep valleys once upon heavily fortified, climbed slopes covered of pines and firs. Those were the tracks for moving wool and sheep to the plain below, the tracks that climbed up to the high pastures and from where the cheese came down on mule back until Caltrano; the road in the Val d’Assa and the tracks in the Val d’Astico were used for moving timber to the sawmills of Arsiero, while the one of the southern woods went to Rozzola in Chiuppano.”

84 Panciera Walter e Rigoni Stern Gianbattista, *Pastori sull’Altopiano*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pagg. 284-5.

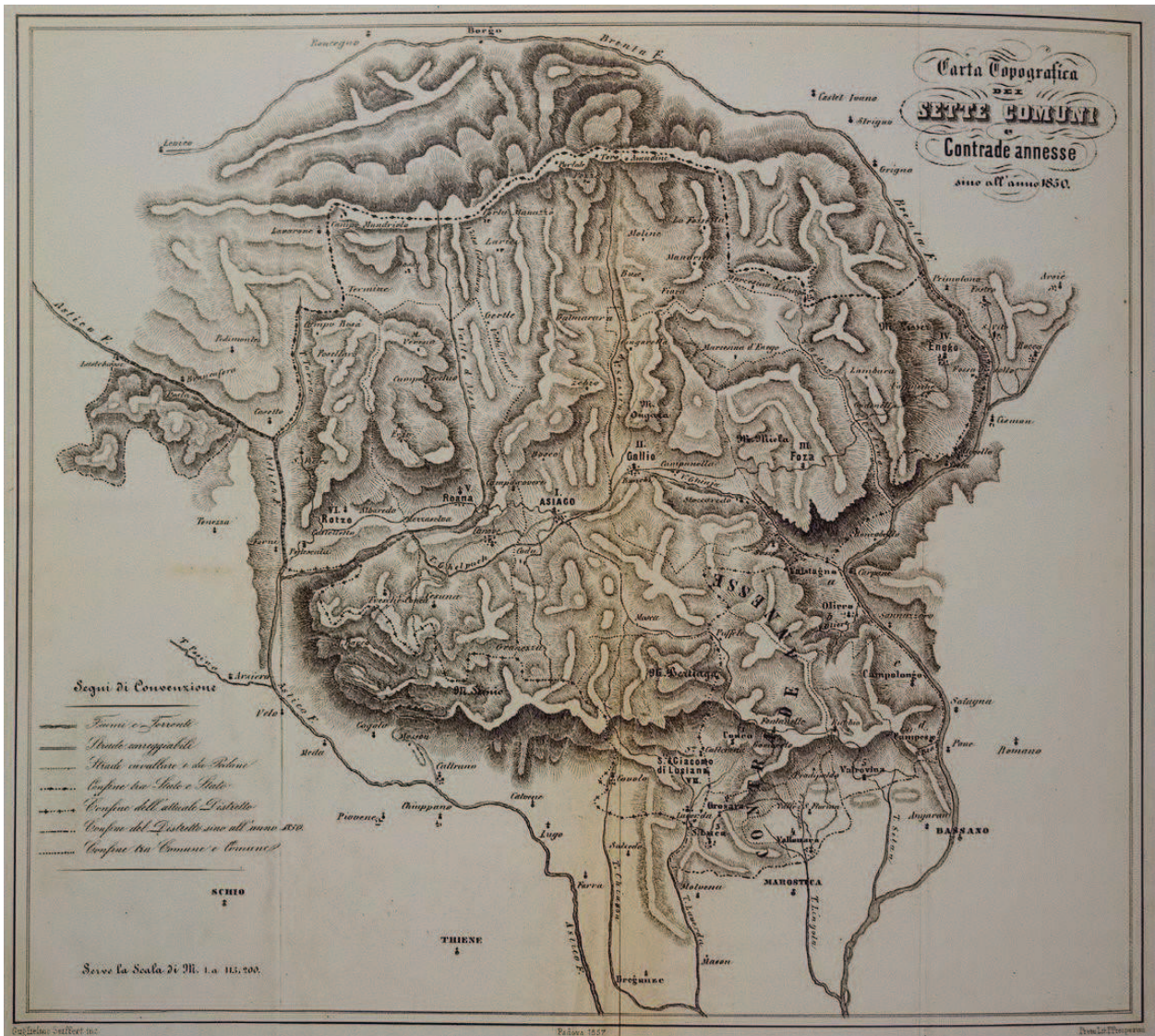


Image 8 Map of Asiago Plateau, 1850 circa: the roads depicted (only one for carts, the Caltrano-Mosson-Asiago, and several mule and foot tracks that linked the Seven Municipalities with the villages of the plain below Pedescala, Rubbio, Vallonara and San Giacomo di Lusiana) are probably less than the existing ones at the time. In fact, there are not mentioned the important routes through the Val d'Assa going to Lavarone Plateau, the step-streets from Enego to the Valsugana and those linking Gallio and Foza with Marcesina. [Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 390]

scendere con cavallo e carretto fino a Cogollo nella valle dell’Astico, mentre verso la Valsugana i trasporti venivano effettuati a soma lungo le tre strade a gradini, la Calà del Sasso (4.444 gradini), la Piovega di Sopra (4.480) e la Piovega di Sotto (5.680). Con la carrozzabile del Costo, per coprire il percorso Asiago-Thiene con cavallo e carretto o con la diligenza della ditta Cunico si impiegavano 5 ore in discesa e 6 in salita.”⁸⁵

It was since mid-Nineteen century, thanks to the entrepreneur Alessandro Rossi of Schio (but his family was originally from Santa Caterina di Lusiana, a hamlet of the Plateau) and the Italian Alpine Club section of Vicenza, that the Plateau experienced a quick urban and street development⁸⁶. Fontana gives a precise report:

“Il centro di Asiago cominciò pertanto a modificare il volto urbano con i viali di circonvallazione iniziati nel 1887 e ultimati nel 1905 e con i ponti di San Cristoforo (1876), del Gelpach (1905) e di San Giovanni (1888), con scuole, caserme e servizi. Il centro montano migliorava la propria immagine urbana con i due viali progettati dall’ingegner Girolamo Girardi di Marostica, i quali dalla stazione ferroviaria scendevano l’uno direttamente in piazza Umberto I e l’altro nel viale di circonvallazione ovest. Si dotava di una rete idrica con la costruzione dell’acquedotto del Grena, in attesa di quello della Renzola. Si progettavano ospedale, casa di ricovero e asilo infantile. Una rete stradale di 68 km collegava il capoluogo dell’Altipiano alle frazioni e contrade, mentre una mulattiera di 49 km avvolgeva le valli e i monti sovrastanti.

[...] Venne così intrapresa fin del 1909, su progetto dell’ingegner Domenico Frigo di Canove, la costruzione della Gallio-Foza, che unì al capoluogo dei Sette Comuni Foza, fino ad allora «relegata in un angolo e segregata quasi dalle altre comunità sorelle». La viabilità stradale ebbe nel primo Novecento notevoli ampliamenti con l’allacciamento delle contrade di Gallio al Capoluogo (Gallio-Ronchi e Gallio-Turchio [sic]), oltre che a Campomulo e all’Altipiano

85 Fontana, quoted, pag. 331: “At the time of publishing his guide [Brentari Ottone, *Guida storico-alpina di Bassano e Sette Comuni. Guida illustrata*, Bassano, 1885] of all the roads described only one, «the one from Mosson to Asiago, is passable by carts for its entire length; and all the others are partly for carts and partly for mules, or entirely only for mules». The provincial road of Costo (36 km) has been the first one opened to carts for the Plateau – begun in 1845, suspended in 1848, resumed in 1851 and finally opened in 1854. Previously the 18.000 inhabitants of the Plateau were connected to the plain below through the old mule track, then open also to carts, that allowed to get by horse and cart to Cogollo in the Val d’Astico, while in the Valsugana side transports were done on burden over three step-tracks, the Calà del Sasso (4444 steps), Piovega di Sopra (4480) and Piovega di Sotto (5680). With the cart road of Costo, to cover the distance between Asiago and Thiene with horse and cart or stage coach, it took 5 hours going down and 6 coming up.”

86 Varotto Mauro, *La nuova vita dell’Altopiano: la grande trasformazione turistica*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pagg. 389-90

di Marcesina per l'importante strada turistica e militare. Il 10 novembre 1905 fu gettata la travata metallica (63 m) del viadotto sulla Val d'Assa (80 metri d'altezza), che, con i suoi 135,40 m di lunghezza, collegava Roana e le frazioni d'oltre Assa, portando a compimento i lavori iniziati nel 1896 su progetto dell'ingegner Aurelio Slaviero di Asiago. L'importante opera venne inaugurata il 17 luglio 1906. Nel 1910 venne ultimato anche il tratto Canove-Cesuna della nuova carrozzabile Canove-Cesuna-Treschè, su un tracciato di 4 km quasi parallelo a quello della ferrovia. La strada, cui si attribuiva notevole importanza commerciale, avrebbe sostituito il disagiata tratto della vecchia provinciale da Treschè a Canove.

Rispetto agli anni Ottanta-Novanta la viabilità stradale era notevolmente migliorata con la Pedescala-Rotzo, che superava 643 m di dislivello su un percorso di 10 km [...], con la recente diramazione San Pietro Valdastico-Rotzo, su tracciato dell'ingegner Saccardo di Schio e, in raccordo con la pedemontana Thiene-Bassano, con la Breganze-San Giacomo di Lusiana. [...] Da Lusiana si dipartirono altre due nuove strade. La prima, di Camporossignolo, venne costruita nel 1906-1907 su progetto dell'ingegner G. Nicolli di Marostica congiungendosi alla carrozzabile Asiago-Sasso. La seconda da Lusiana si allacciava a Conco. Di qui, per la sella del Puffele, venne realizzato un collegamento diretto con Asiago. L'apertura della ferrovia della Valsugana, infine, diede impulso anche alla costruzione della carrozzabile Enego-Primolano, mentre la Caldonazzo-Lavarone-Asiago, attraverso la pittoresca strada della Val Centa, metteva in comunicazione mediante servizio corriera l'Altipiano dei Sette Comuni con quello di Lavarone e coi laghi trentini.”⁸⁷

87 Fontana, quoted, pagg. 339-40: “The town centre of Asiago begun changing its urban shape with the construction of the two boulevards started in 1887 and ended in 1905 and with the bridges of San Cristoforo (1876), Gelpach (1905) and San Giovanni (1888), with schools, garrisons and services. The mountain town was improving its urban aspect with two boulevards designed by the engineer Girolamo Girardi of Marostica, which departing from the train station went one straight to Piazza Umberto I and the other one joined with the western boulevard. An aqueduct was also built, that of the Grena spring, waiting for the one from the Renzola springs. An hospital, an elderly house and a kindergarten were planned. A street net of 68 km connected the town of Asiago with the surrounding hamlets, while a mule track of 49 km linked it with all the upper mountains.[...] Since 1909, based on a plan of engineer Domenico Frigo of Canove, begun the construction of the road Gallio-Foza, that connected the centre of the Plateau with Foza, until then «relegated into a corner and kind of separated from the sister communities». The road infrastructures at the beginning of Twentieth century saw noteworthy developments with the connection of Gallio with its hamlets (Gallio-Ronchi and Gallio-Turchio [sic]) and also to Campomulo and the Marcesina plateau, through the military street. On 10th November 1905 the first beam (63 m.) of the bridge over the Val d'Assa (80 m. deep) was put in place, and with its 135,40 m of length linked Roana with the hamlets on the other side of the valley, completing the works started in 1896 by engineer Aurelio Slaviero of Asiago. The important structure was inaugurated on 17th July 1906. In 1910 was also completed the last piece of road between Canove and Cesuna of the road Canove-Cesuna-Tresché of 4 km, running beside the railway. The road, reputed very important for commerce, would have replaced the old provincial road from Tresché to Canove. Compared to the situation of 1880-1890 the road infrastructure has been remarkably improved with the road Pedescala-Rotzo that climbed up a 643 m. drop in 10 km [...], with the recent branch San Pietro Valdastico-Rotzo on design of engineer Saccardo of Schio and, in junction with the piedmont road Thiene-Bassano, the Breganze-San Giacomo di Lusiana. [...] From Lusiana starts

The infrastructures of the Plateau at the beginning of Nineteen century were, therefore, deeply changing the traditional territory of the Plateau itself and were pushing it towards an increasing integration with the plain below.

Eventually, for what concern the legitimacy structures, the main ones were the Regency Palace, located in Piazza Statuto in Asiago, the numerous boundary stones place by the Republic of Venice on 1780⁸⁸, churches and religious structures and, after the Unification of Italy, the Reali Carabinieri garrison that represented the royal power.

It is evident, therefore, how the Plateau at the beginning of Twentieth century was the base of a solid traditional territorialization created in over a millennia of continued living: traditional uses of land and woods, a strong community identity represented through the use of toponyms in Cimbrian dialects and specific building styles, and a road net recently improved characterised this territory still strongly linked with the past but also projected to a future of integration with the plain and of tourist development.

FIRST SIGNS OF MILITARY TERRITORIALIZATION

In this context, since the annexation of Veneto to Italy, military territorialization insert itself slowly and imperceptibly: not for resources exploitation nor for development opportunities but merely for a military-strategic logic, linked to the geographic border location and the topographic of the terrain, as seen in the beginning of this chapter.

Legitimacy sources of military territorialization, modality of representation and territorial project have already been explicated: in the following chapter the study will focus on the implementation of this project during the four years of conflict, but first, we'll give a glance to the military territorialization before the war.

It started in 1907 with the construction of the first fort, Forte Punta Corbin, followed by other fortifications.

“Tra il 1911 e il 1913, sul ciglio orientale dell'altopiano dei Sette Comuni, a quota 1666 metri, fu eretto il forte Lisser che, assieme ai dirimpettai forti di Cima di Campo e di Cima di

another two new roads. The first, of Camporossignolo, was built in 1906-1907 on project of engineer G. Nicolli of Marostica joining the road Asiago-Sasso. The second connected Lusiana to Conco. From here, through the Puffele Pass, a link was created directly to Asiago. Finally, the opening of the railway in the Valsugana promoted the construction of the roads Primolano-Enego and Caldonazzo-Lavarone-Asiago, that connected by coach Asiago with the lakes of Trentino.”

88 Pitteri Mauro, *La fine delle dispute confinarie: le Terminazione “equa e giusta” del 1752*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 200

Lan, doveva controllare le provenienze dalla Valsugana e allo stesso tempo era orientato per arginare eventuali infiltrazioni da ovest, lungo l'acrocoro settentrionale dell'Altopiano di Asiago. Tra il 1912 e il 1914, in posizione elevata, a quota 2019, appiattito sul vertice dei possenti roccioni calcarei che strapiombano da ovest sulla media val d'Assa, fu costruito il forte Verena, considerato la migliore opera italiana del settore. Il compito affidato a questa fortezza era di controllare la val d'Assa da eventuali attacchi nemici provenienti dalla piana di Vezza.

A distanza di circa cinque chilometri in linea d'aria in direzione sud-sud-ovest, il forte Campolongo, eretto tra il 1911 e il 1913 a quota 1720 metri, completava egregiamente il sistema realizzato fra Assa e Astico come possibile salvaguardia delle rispettive provenienze e come sostegno alle truppe operanti contro le opposte opere di Luserna e Busa Verle.

A circa sei chilometri in linea d'aria a sud del forte di Campolongo – su uno sperone angolare che con il nodo del monte Cengio protende fra lo sbocco dell'Assa nell'Astico e la vicina stretta di Barcarola – il forte di Punta Corbin (costruito tra il 1907 e il 1911 a 1077 metri) esercitava un'evidente funzione di sbarramento e di sostegno alle opere situate a settentrione, collegandosi col sottostante forte di Casa Ratti, sparando sull'antistante altipiano di Tonezza e assicurando, infine, nella peggiore delle ipotesi, il fondamentale possesso del Cengio.

Edificato tra il 1906 e il 1908, di poco sovrastante la strada che giungeva dal confine, il forte di Casa Ratti, assieme al forte di Punta Corbin, formava una sorta di sistema difensivo per le provenienze dalla valle dell'Astico.”⁸⁹

From this description is clear that, before the conflict, military structures were limited to some forts, usually located far from the villages, at the fringe of the Plateau, on top of mountain or cliffs

⁸⁹ Malatesta Leonardo, *La guerra dei forti*, Nordpress edizioni, Rodegno Saiano (BS), 2003, pagg. 204-5: “Between 1911 and 1913, on the eastern edge of the Plateau, 1666 m. above the sea level, was built Forte Lisser which, together with the opposite Cima di Campo and Cima di Lan forts controlled the Valsugana below and the possible infiltrations from the West, crossing the Plateau. Between 1912 and 1914, on high position, 2019 m. above sea level, flattened over the calcareous cliffs dropping on the western side of Val d'Assa, was built Forte Verena, considered the best Italian fortification of the sector. The duty conferred to this structure was to control possible enemy attacks coming from the Vezza plain. At a distance of nearly 5 km direction south-south-west, Fort Campolongo, built between 1911 and 1913 at 1720 m. above the sea level, completed perfectly the system created between Assa and Astico valleys, to check enemy movements and support friendly attacking troops against Austro-Hungarian fortifications of Busa Verle and Luserna. At circa six kilometres south – on a corner cliff that protrude over Barcarola in the Val d'Astico – Forte punta Corbin (built between 1907 and 1911 at 1077 meters above sea level) exerted a blocking and supporting function with the northern structures, linked to the below Forte Casa Ratti, shooting to the opposite Tonezza Plateau and granting, in the worst of the cases, the possession of Monte Cengio. Built between 1906 and 1908, slightly above the road coming from the frontier, Forte Casa Ratti, together with Forte Punta Corbin, formed a sort of defensive system checking attacks coming from the Val d'Astico.”

dropping over valleys: those terrain “irregularities” that often prevented the implementation of traditional territorialization, were indeed the perfect location for military structures. The reasons have already been showed: take advantage of the higher position to dishearten and weary the enemy and to benefit of a wide panorama over enemy movements.

In the beginning military territorialization interfered very slightly with the traditional one, far as it was from attractive locations for the inhabitants and from their houses. In the first chapter has been analysed the strict correlation between army legitimacy and state of exception: a link immediately visible also on the Plateau. To obtain the terrains where to built the fortifications and for their administration, the army drew upon special law, namely military easement and martial law.⁹⁰

“L'utilizzazione militare di piazzeforti e fortificazioni rendeva necessaria l'imposizione di vincoli alla proprietà privata dei fondi limitrofi, per assicurare la visibilità e i campi di tiro delle artiglierie e impedire che il nemico potesse avvantaggiarsi di eventuali opere di urbanizzazione per impiantarvi le proprie batterie d'assedio.”⁹¹

As already seen for the state of war in the first chapter, also for martial easement existed a lack of law regulation, that appointed the State with a “*nearly unlimited discretion on declaration and claim of martial easement.*”⁹² The problem with martial easement was that it was declared for public utility but actually only the army can have the use of it.

“Le cosiddette «servitù» militari avevano [maggiore estensione] rispetto a quelle prediali (private e pubbliche), estensione che esulava dalla tradizionale concezione della servitù come rapporto tra un fondo («servente») assoggettato [...] al vantaggio di un altro fondo («dominante»), e che qualificava necessariamente i vincoli militari tra i limiti di diritto pubblico anziché tra le servitù.”⁹³

90 Ilari Virgilio, *Demanio e servitù militari nella legislazione sardo-italiana. Profilo storico-giuridico*, in *Esercito e città dall'unità agli anni Trenta: convegno nazionale di studi*, Spoleto, 11-14 maggio 1988, pag. 787: “*Military easement arise in strict functional relation with the so-called «martial propriety», composed mostly of permanent fortifications. It answers the need to update the forts to the increasing artillery range and to siege war in general.*”

91 Idem, pag. 789: “*The military use of fortifications made necessary the obligation of restriction to private proprieties of neighbouring terrains, to assure the visibility and range of fire of artillery and to avoid the enemy to take advantage of buildings where to put in place siege gun batteries.*”

92 Idem, pag. 789

93 Idem, pagg. 789-90: “*The so-called martial easement had [a wider extension] compared to public or private easement, extension that fell outside the common definition of easement as a relation between a dominant and a servient estate and that necessarily qualified it among public law limits and not among easement.*”

The state of exception materialized itself through the imposition of restrictions over private property and of the surrounding terrains and the use of martial law even during peace time: in the mountain context, military territorialization and the fortifications that, before the war, gave essence to it, where like “islands” inside traditional territorialization both geographically – for their location and limited extension – and legally, since they were ruled under martial – and not ordinary – law.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR AND THE MILITARY TERRITORIALIZATION OF THE PLATEAU

What explained in the previous chapter about legitimacy, representation modality and territorial project, for both the traditional and the military territorialization, came under a deeper reciprocal relation and influence during the First World War: it was in this period, in fact, that latent effects of the state of exception got more visible, that the territorial project of the army got implemented in its entirety to the detriment of the traditional one, and that begun a deep *structurization* of the territory – completely alien to the existing one. The effects of the state of exception and of a conflict longer than expected, that involved millions of people and enormous quantities of goods, had lasting consequences on the traditional territorialization.

LEGITIMACY

If the declaration of war happened on 24th May 1915, state of exception started getting shape already some days before, precisely on 22nd May, when the parliament approved law number 671 that conferred extraordinary powers to the government in case of war. A set of royal decrees approved in the following days extended the state of exception: particularly R.D. (Royal Decree) 674 titled “Extraordinary provision over public security” brought restrictions to association rights, demonstrations, firearms license, civil and religious processions, theatre representations, markets and fairs. Particularly noteworthy was art. 2 that put public authority under military officers on matters of public security.

“Senza pregiudizio delle disposizioni di cui agli articoli 243 e seguenti del codice penale per l’esercito e agli articoli 597 e seguenti del codice penale marittimo, la direzione dei servizi di pubblica sicurezza in qualunque parte del territorio dello Stato, e l’esercizio dei poteri straordinari consentiti col presente e con qualunque altro decreto o legge dello Stato in materia di pubblica sicurezza, potranno con decreto del ministro dell’interno essere affidati a comandanti militari o a commissari civili all’uopo designati. In tal caso tutte le autorità civili

e militari per quanto si riferisce ai servizi di pubblica sicurezza dipenderanno dai detti comandanti militari o commissari civili.”⁹⁴

Following provisions like R.D. 675, 688, 689 introduced new regulations for press and mail, telegraphy, radiotelegraphy and telephony censorship; R.D. 698 regulated the circulation of maps;



Image 9 Map showing the chronological expansion of the areas declared under state of war during First World War [Isnenghi Mario e Ceschin Daniele (a cura di), *La Grande Guerra. Uomini e luoghi del '15-'18*, UTET, Torino, 2008, vol. 2]

94 “Without prejudice to the dispositions of articles 243 and followings of the Codice Penale per l'Esercito and of the articles 597 and followings of the Maritime Penal Code, the direction of public security services everywhere in the State, and the extraordinary powers allowed with the present and any other future royal decree or law over public security matters, can be given – with decree of the ministry of interior – to military officers or civil commissioners. In this case all civil and military authorities will depend – on matters related to public security – to these officers or commissioners.”

R.D. 703 listed those municipalities and localities under state of war.⁹⁵

As visible in picture 9, the areas declared under state of war in 1915 corresponded to the provinces of Sondrio, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, Belluno, Udine, Venice, Treviso, Padua, Mantua, Ferrara, the islands and the coastal municipalities facing the Adriatic Sea. With the ongoing war, as consequence of military actions or riots, like the workers uprising in Turin on August 1917, more and more provinces came under control of the state of war until, eventually, all northern Italy was under the control of military authorities.

*“Quando il 25 maggio 1915 il governo del re dichiarò guerra all’Austria-Ungheria, iniziava il cosiddetto tempo di guerra (25 maggio 1915). Una sola parte del territorio veniva considerata in stato di guerra e cioè come zona di guerra, creandosi in tal modo una distinzione giuridicamente artificiosa e incongruente, produttrice di equivoci e di confusione, specialmente nei rapporti giurisdizionali.”*⁹⁶

The area declared under state of war was then further divide in two zones – of operations and behind the lines: the first corresponded to the portion of territory directly involved in military operations and roughly delimited inside the range of medium artillery fire; the second extended itself behind the operations zone and there were located all the logistic structures needed to support the first lines. It is important to highlight that in the operations zone the access was prohibited to all non-military personnel and the area was ruled only by martial jurisdiction, while the second saw a coexistence of martial and civil law.⁹⁷

“Nella zona di guerra [...] ai comandanti militari era riconosciuta una potestà legislativa ex art. 251 c.p.e. Si trattava di una delega permanente del potere legislativo – circoscritta al tempo di guerra – che il parlamento aveva attuato a favore dei comandanti militari e che si esercitava attraverso bandi, ordinanze e regolamenti. Tale potere legislativo delegato si manifestava in atti che costituivano leggi vere e proprie le quali non erano affatto vincolate

95 All the official gazettes published from the Unification till the First Italian Republic (1861-1946) can be seen for free at <http://augusto.digitpa.gov.it>

96 Latini, quoted, pag. 72. *“When, on 25th may 1915, the government declared war to Austria-Hungary, begun the so-called time of war. Only a part of the State was considered under state of war – in other words military operation zone – creating therefore an artificial and incongruous juridical distinction, that produced misunderstandings and confusion, especially in jurisprudence relations.”*

97 Malatesta Leonardo, *Una regione in armi: Thiene e il Veneto dal 1866 alla Grande Guerra*, Trento, Temi, 2010, pag. 241; Latini, quoted, pag. 77: *“The zone of operations was ruled under an exceptional military police regime: in it the main activities of the army were carried out and should be considered in the presence of the enemy.”*

ALLE POPOLAZIONI
DELL' AGNO, LEOGRA, POSINA, ASTICO E ASSA

Cittadini!

L'Italia all'appello del suo Re scende in armi con l'Austriaco conculcatore dei nostri diritti, oppressore di tanti nostri fratelli. All'Esercito spetta il glorioso quanto difficile compito di esigere colla forza che la volontà della Nazione si compia. Le vostre terre fiorenti non dovranno conoscere l'insulto dell'invasione di un nemico che non dà quartiere e l'Esercito impegnerà tutte le sue energie, fino al sacrificio della vita per salvaguardare le vostre case e tener lontani da voi gli orrori della guerra. Siate fidenti e aspettate tranquilli, senza panico inconsulto, che il nostro buon diritto trionfi.

Ma voi dovete dare all'Esercito quanto a lui occorre, quanto gli è indispensabile per essere forte ed agile. La legge impone che ogni prestazione necessaria all'Esercito gli è dovuta dietro equo ed immediato compenso o dietro rilascio di buoni regolari da liquidare in seguito. Io sono certo che questo dovere imposto dalla legge voi compirete volentieri, ricordando che le necessità dell'Esercito debbono ora tenere sempre il primo posto e che dovrò essere inesorabile nell'esigerlo per il bene vostro, per il bene del Paese.

Cittadini!

Fidenti nel vostro aiuto, nella concordia dei vostri cuori che battono all'unisono con quelli dei vostri figli raccolti sotto le bandiere noi riporteremo la vittoria al grido santo di:

Viva il Re! Viva l'Italia!

Schio, 23 Maggio 1915.

*Il Comandante militare
dello sbarramento Agno, Leogra, Posina, Astico, Assa*
FERRI

ALLE POPOLAZIONI DELL' ALTIPIANO DI ASIAGO

S. M. il Re, con R. Decreto in data di ieri, ha ordinato la mobilitazione del R. Esercito e dell'Armata e con altro Regio Decreto, pure in data di ieri, ha determinato che il territorio di alcune provincie, compresa quella di Vicenza, sia considerato in istato di guerra.

Pertanto da oggi restano a me affidati l'ordine e la sicurezza pubblica. In dipendenza di quanto sopra, ordino:

1. Sono vietati gli assembramenti e le dimostrazioni di qualunque genere.
2. Gli esercizi pubblici, dovranno rimanere chiusi dalle 21 alle 6.
3. Tutte le persone dovranno rimanere nelle loro case dalle 21 alle 4.30.
4. I forestieri, anche se italiani, saranno sempre denunziati immediatamente dalle Autorità Comunali, albergatori, affitta camere, ecc. all'Arma dei R.R. C.C. per le indagini e provvedimenti del caso.
5. Uguale denuncia sarà fatta intanto subito per quei forestieri, anche se cittadini italiani, che si trovassero stabiliti temporaneamente in qualche località dell'Altipiano.

6. Di notte sarà abolito qualunque sistema di illuminazione stradale. Le abitazioni, gli edifici pubblici e quelli privati che dovessero rimanere illuminati nell'interno, dovranno avere le imposte e porte chiuse.

Spetta agli agenti di forza pubblica, ed ove occorra, all'Autorità Militare, di far rispettare gli ordini di cui sopra.

I contravventori saranno senz'altro arrestati e denunciati a termini di legge.

Asiago, 23 Maggio 1915.

*Il Tenente Generale
Comandante delle truppe dell'Altipiano*
ORO

ALLE POPOLAZIONI DELL' ALTIPIANO DI ASIAGO

Cittadini dell' Altipiano!

L'onore e il prestigio della nostra grande Patria sono oramai affidati all'Esercito e all'Armata.

La Nazione deve attendere fiduciosa e tranquilla.

Vi invito pertanto a mantenere sempre e in ogni occasione la calma e la serenità, perchè l'Esercito si senta sorretto dalla Nazione.

Ogni cittadino deve essere innanzi tutto buon italiano. Fermo nel proposito di tornar utile alla Patria, egli ha il dovere di concorrere con tutti i mezzi di cui dispone, alla buona riuscita delle operazioni militari: tutti, anche le donne, i vecchi ed i fanciulli possono trovar modo di rendersi utili all'Esercito e al Paese.

Quanto occorre all'Esercito gli è dovuto; le prestazioni che saranno richieste a voi saranno equamente compensate, con rimborso immediato o con buoni da liquidare in seguito. Siate sempre larghi nel concedere quanto è richiesto per l'Esercito, senza che mai la Autorità militare debba estorcervelo per forza.

Faccio pieno assegnamento sulle gloriose tradizioni patriottiche di questa bella Regione e confido che, per amor di Patria, Voi saprete mantenere il massimo riserbo su quanto interessi le operazioni militari e che venisse a vostra conoscenza.

Cittadini!

Gli eventi oramai maturi stanno per portarci verso una più grande Italia. Siate sempre forti e virili, come i Vostri grandi antenati.

Viva l'Italia! Viva il Re!

Asiago, 23 Maggio 1915.

*Il Tenente Generale
Comandante delle truppe dell'Altipiano*
ORO

Image 10 Series of announcements of Gen. Oro addressed to the population of Vicenza province living close to the front line. Until 15th May 1916 only few small villages near the Italo-Austrian frontier were evacuated: in the others not evacuated the cohabitation of civilians and the army was ruled through martial regulations that limited some private freedoms. [De Mori, cit., pagg. 36-8]

*alle formalità prescritte per la formazione e la promulgazione della legge.*⁹⁸

Aside from extraordinary legislative power, state of war modified also civil and penal prosecution procedure, as seen in the first chapter, since it extended the authority of martial courts even in the matters exclusively ruled by ordinary courts. Therefore anyone might be judged under martial courts, even for a crime that slightly interfered with the military sphere.

*“L’art. 236 c.p.e. disponeva che in tempo di guerra e per i reati riservati alla competenza dei tribunali militari le persone estranee alla milizia che commettevano o concorrevano a commettere un reato contemplato nel codice dovevano essere sottoposte alle pene nello stesso inflitte. Nel caso di concorso, la qualità di militare di uno dei colpevoli assoggettava tutti indistintamente alla legge penale militare.”*⁹⁹

This set of regulations, ordinary power delegations and the application of martial law created a state of exception inside the areas declared in state of war, with different degrees of seriousness depending on the distance from the war zone: in fact, closer someone gets to the front lines and more strict and extensive was the application of martial rules.

For what concern the Plateau and the Vicenza province, they were declared under state of war since 23rd May as they were bordering Austro-Hungarian territories. With General Gobbo's ordinance of 31st July, the operation zone was comprised above the line Selva di Progno – Crespadoro – Valdagno – Strada Valdagno-Recoaro-Schio – Rocchette (ferrovia) – Astico – Calvene – Contrà Campana (Lusiana) – Bocchetta Camporossignolo – Sasso di Asiago – Valstagna – Cismon – Primolano – Feltre.¹⁰⁰ Despite being inside the war zone, the inhabitants of the Plateau were not evacuated, since the front line was on the north-western fringe of it and the manoeuvres has been – until May 1916 – sporadic and limited: the cohabitation of soldiers and civilians was regulated by ordinances of the military commander, as visible in picture 10. Restriction to freedom of movement, curfew, control of extraneous people were all cogent aspects of the state of war that

98 Latini, quoted, pagg. 72-3: *“In the war zone [...] to military commanders was recognized a legislative power as from art. 251 of the Codice penale per l'Esercito. It was a permanent delegation of legislative power – limited to war time – that parliament did on behalf of the army and that was exerted through ordinances, announcements and regulations. This delegated legislative power expressed itself as norms having the power of true laws, not bound to those formalities prescribed for the formation and promulgation of ordinary laws.”*

99 Idem, pag. 75: *“Art. 236 of the Codice penale per l'Esercito disposed that in war time, for those crimes reserved to martial courts competency, people extraneous to the army that committed – or concur to commit – a felony considered inside the military codex should be judged under its laws. In the case of complicity, if one of the felons was a soldier then all of the group should be judged under martial law.”*

100 De Mori Giuseppe, *Vicenza nella guerra 1915-1918*, Vicenza, Rumor, 1931, pag. 54

aroused tensions between locals and soldiers and the respective territorializations.

Following the spring offensive launched by the Austrians in May 1916, the Plateau was completely occupied by the enemy and all its population was forced to a rapid and terrific flee;

the war zone was consequently expanded more south on 1st June as far as 1 km north of Vicenza, on

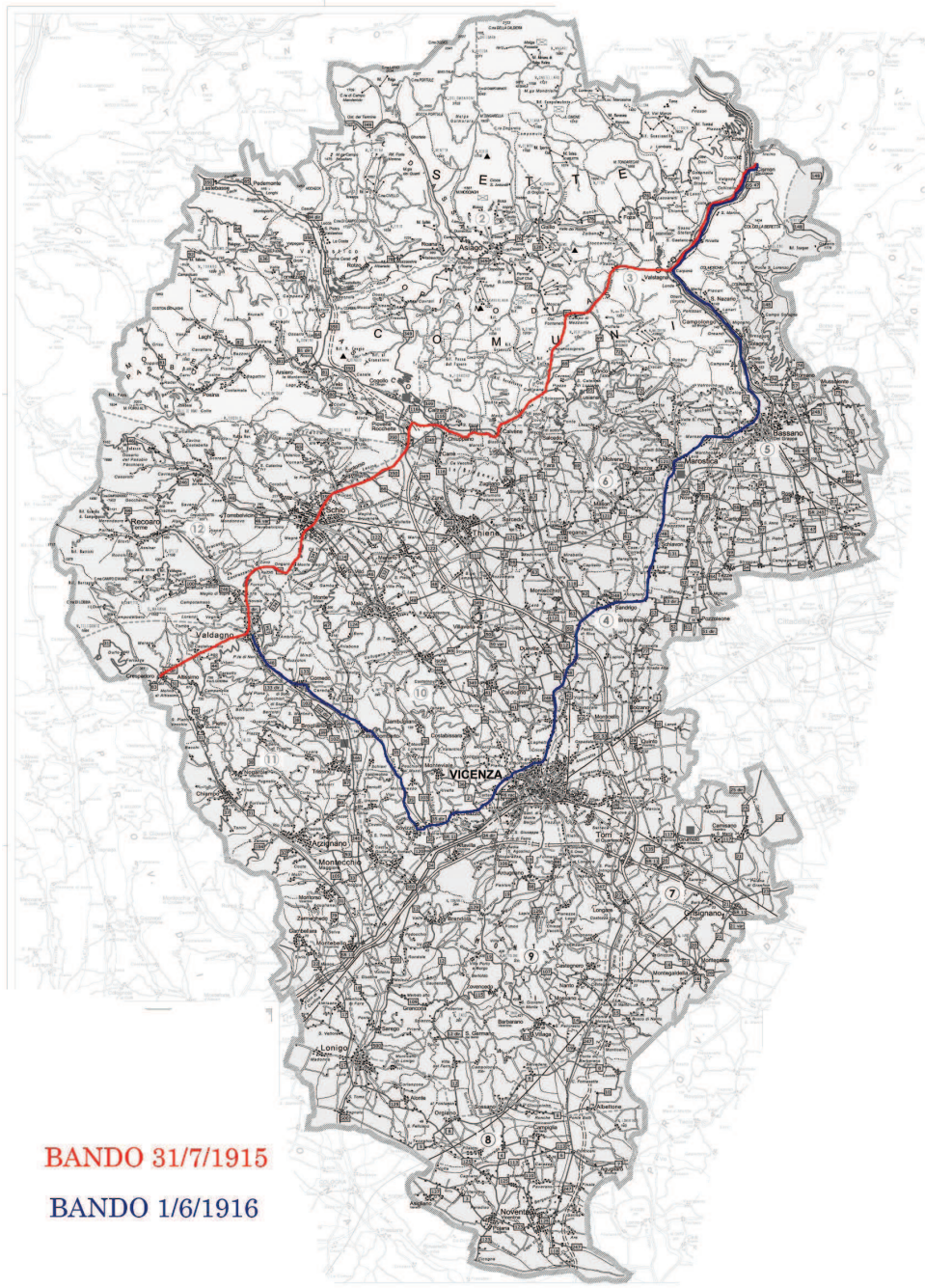


Image 11 Map showing the expansion of areas comprised inside zone of operations in Vicenza province as of martial announcements of 31/7/1915 and 1/6/1916 [<http://www.vi-abilita.it/rete/mappa.php>]

the new line Valdagno – Cornedo – Castelgomberto – Sovizzo – Creazzo – Albera – Povolaro – Sandrigo – Ancignano – Schiavon – Marostica – Marsan – Bassano (escluso l’abitato) – Valstagna – Cison – Feltre. Briefly, between 16th July and 10th August, the line was moved further south to include Vicenza, and then moved back again on the same location of 1st June, as soon as the offensive has been stopped.¹⁰¹

A new, deep withdrawal of the front happened with Caporetto breakthrough and the zone of war was extended also to Lombardia and Emilia Romagna provinces.

*“Caporetto doveva portare il territorio delle operazioni addirittura fino alla linea del Mincio-Po (bando Cadorna del 20 ottobre 1917) e quindi dal 2 novembre 1917 furono incluse nella zona delle operazioni le intere Province di Vicenza, Treviso, Belluno, Padova, Rovigo e Verona e metà della Provincia di Mantova, mentre la linea delle retrovie si spingeva fino agli appennini da Cremona, Modena, Bologna fino a Rimini ed Ancona.”*¹⁰²

So the Plateau has been inside the war zone since the beginning of the conflict – and inside the zone of manoeuvres since 19th May 1916 – until the end of the conflict on 4th November 1918: the absence of civilians during the worst moments of the war entailed a phenomena of de-territorialization of the traditional territory, in favour of military territorialization that, as consequence, has been particularly pervading and incisive.

REPRESENTATION MODALITIES

Once established its authority over the border territories through the delimitation of the war zone, the army carries out that preliminary stage to the implementation of his territorial project that is, the minute representation of the terrain where the army itself will operate. If in the second chapter has been outlined the general military strategic view of the army over the north-western Italian territory, now it is necessary to get down to details: the recognition and individuation on the ground of bumps, hollows, ridges, woods, water streams, and in general of all those natural and artificial hindrances that might have effected troops movement, was an operation necessary to the planning

101 Idem, pagg. 54-55

102 De Mori, quoted, pag. 56: *“Caporetto brought the territory of manoeuvres even to the Mincio-Po line (Cadorna's ordnance of 20th October 1917) and so, since 2nd Novemeber 1917, also the provinces of Vicenza, Treviso, Belluno, Padua, Rovigo and Verona and half of the province of Mantua were inside the war zone, while the area behind the lines was stretched to the Apennines, from Cremona, Modena, Bologna, until Rimini and Ancona.”*

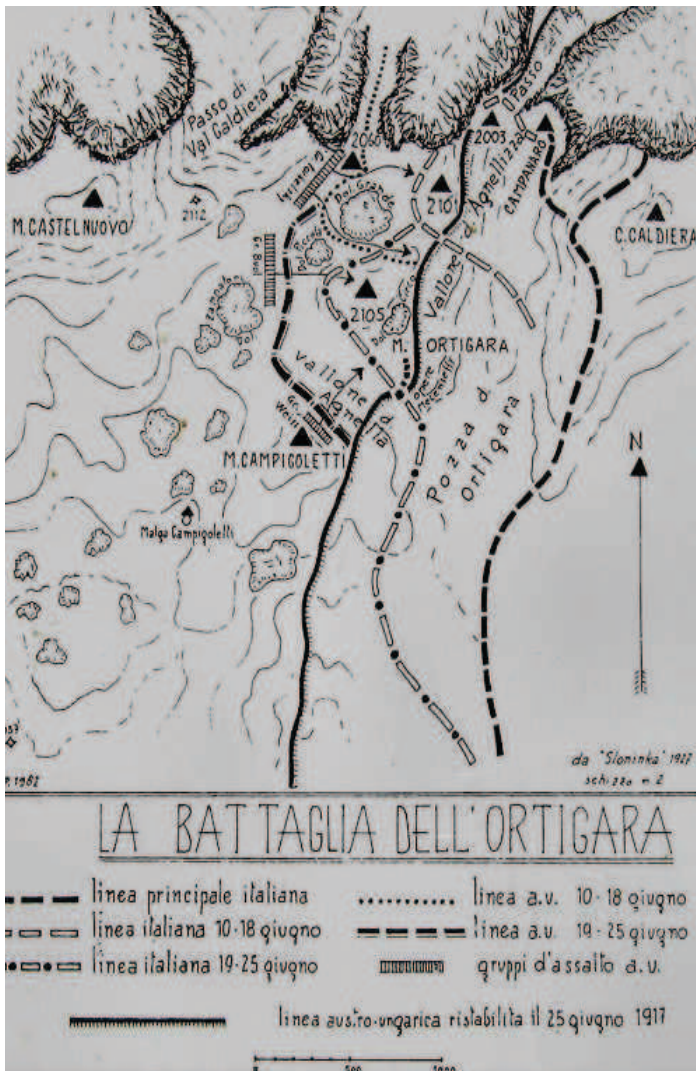


Image 12 Map showing the Battle of Monte Ortigara (10-25 June 1917). It should be noted how, in addition to traditional denomination (Monte Ortigara, Monte Campigoletti, Cima della Caldiera, Vallone dell'Agnelizza, etc.), the army individuates also those halfway hills that compose the Ortigara mountain group: the army doesn't give names to them but identify them by mean of their altitude (quotas 2003, 2101, 2105, 2112). [Source <http://www.magicoveneto.it/altipian/Ortigara/Ortigara.htm>]

of operations and to the management of attacks.¹⁰³

The thousand-years old frequent of the Plateau allowed the locals, in the traditional territorialization, to individuate and denominate several noteworthy peculiarities of the terrain: more detailed in the central area as consequence of the constant living, it thinned out going progressively far from the villages to the fringes of the Plateau. This had two consequences: the first was that when the army started – initially side by side with the locals and then taking it over – its territorialization process, it recycled the existing names given by traditional denomination; the second was that, acting mainly on the borders of the Plateau, the army had to face a deficiency of traditional denomination, since the front line was far from the villages, frequented only seasonally and only for farming: consequently the traditional denomination individuated only those features useful for farming and the seasonal use of the available resources. This deficiency of denomination forced the army to create new toponyms: to have a rapid and clear representation of the terrain, the

103 Johnson, quoted, pagg. XVIII-XIX

army resorted mainly to a referential denomination, based on altitude and coordinates, so to be able to identify univocally a point on the surface. For what concerns symbolic denomination, rather scarce, it is possible to list the names Assalto degli alpini (Assault of the alpini, near Monte Colombara), Busa degli Sloveni (Hollow of the Slovenians, close to Monte Chiesa), Mina della Botte (Mine of the barrel), Lunetta della Zebio e Mina dello Scalambron (Zebio little moon and Scalambron mine were localities of an Italian mine shaft, exploded prematurely in June 1917), Fortino (Pillbox, in Canove di Sotto), Salto dei granatieri (Grenadiers jump on Monte Cengio. The legend says that the last soldiers of the Sardinia Grenadier Regiment defending this cliff, being run out of munitions and supplies, made the last sacrifice jumping down the drop embraced to Austrian soldiers).

Cartographic representation took on a particularly important role during the war, as mentioned in chapter 2: the development and upgrade of aerial photogrammetry and topographic survey tools made possible the representation of the ground with a high level of precision.

*“La Grande Guerra segna nella cartografia un momento rivoluzionario, e non solo per le nuove tecniche di ripresa terrestre ed aerea messe a punto, ma anche e soprattutto per l’unione del momento storico con il territorio nello spazio e nel tempo: cartografia temporalmente determinata realizzata sul fronte per il fronte in quel preciso momento. Non vi è nessuna disgiunzione tra il cartografo ed il soldato, nessun intervallo temporale di scarto.”*¹⁰⁴

During the conflict some 20 million maps were produced¹⁰⁵, mostly in the size of scale of 1:25000 that permitted a detailed representation of the terrain.

“Ben presto la caratteristica di guerra di posizione, che si andava delineando, rese necessaria la preparazione di carte con un maggior dettaglio, dove poter riportare i particolari inerenti alle postazioni, alle dislocazioni, ai manufatti difensivi e a quant’altro potesse essere utile conoscere alle nostre truppe. [...] molte zone del territorio italiano, dense di particolari topografici o importanti dal punto di vista militare, necessitavano molto spesso

104 Vaccari, quoted, pag. 6: *“The Great War marks a revolutionary moment in cartography, and not only for the terrestrial and aerial survey techniques developed, but also and above all for the junction between the historical moment with territory in time and space: cartography determined by time, realized on the front for the front in that precise moment. There is no more distinction between cartographer and soldier, nor interval of time.”*

105 Idem

*di rilevamenti di dettaglio che furono effettuati alla scala 1:25.000.*¹⁰⁶

The lack of denomination previously described is clearly visible in military cartographic production of the time, not only in the maps at 1:25000 but also in smaller operations sketches. Traditional territorialization didn't need such detailed representation, contrary to the military one:

“[Le carte riportavano numerosi] particolari, in modo che il fruitore della carta potesse avere l'idea di come effettivamente nella realtà essi fossero, senza incorrere in equivoci o errori, che nella maggior parte dei casi avrebbero pregiudicato la vita.”¹⁰⁷



Image 13 Map of the higher part of the Plateau. The Karst topography of the terrain gives it a rough ground dotted by hollows, ridges and small sharp humps. Despite this numerous terrain “irregularities”, where to anchor traditional denomination, the distance from the villages and the scarce usefulness for agriculture entailed a rather limited traditional territorialization. On the other side the army identifies several terrain features – of tactical relevance – by their altitude value. [Map from www.pcn.minambiente.it]

STRUCTURIZATION

The creation of structures by the army, although created in just four years, was particularly pervading and incisive. The presence of a huge mass of soldiers on the front lines (something like

106 Idem, pag. 13: “Soon the characteristic static warfare, that was taking shape, made necessary the preparation of maps with more details, where to put those specifics about pillboxes, emplacements, defensive structures, etc. that might be useful to be known by our troops. [...] many areas of Italian territory, dense of topographic peculiarities important from a military point of view, often needed detailed surveys that were done at a scale of 1:25.000.”

107 Cristofari, quoted, pag. 36. “[Maps showed several] details, so the user of the map was able to have an idea of how they were in reality, without incur on misinterpretation or errors, that – in most of the cases – may have compromised his life.”

800.000 soldiers were in the lines in summer 1916¹⁰⁸) inferred the construction of extended and extensive logistic centres, so to induce Vittorio Corà to speak of a “widespread urbanization” of the Plateau. Trenches, dugouts and galleries built in solid rock in order to assure the appropriate defence from HE shells, are artefacts that still etches grasslands and ridges of the Plateau. It is evident that traditional territorialization did not have neither need nor energy and coordination sufficient enough to the creation of such structurization: in this aspect also is evident how the same space is represented and modified in completely different way, depending on the projects and the needs of the actor.

In the previous chapter it has been shown how, through forts and martial easements, the structurization of the Plateau begun before the war. At the beginning of the war, the zone of operations remained limited to north-western part of the Plateau, close to the State frontier. The presence of Italian and Austro-Hungarian fortifications blocked, until May 1916, any successful breakthrough and the modification of the positions established at the beginning of the conflict, even by means of restless and bloody assaults.¹⁰⁹

Over this period (May 1915 – May 1916) military structurization was limited to a marginal area of the Plateau: the local population was able to stay in its houses, since they were far enough from the zone of operations. With the beginning of Austro-Hungarian Spring Offensive on 15th May 1916, the zone of operations rapidly interested all the Plateau, forcing the local inhabitants to flee and the army to a huge effort to stop the enemy advance: this was achieved also by mean of a deeper and wider military structurization of the territory. As visible in picture 14, the main trench lines occurred on the northern (May 1915 – October 1917) and southern (October 1917 – November 1918) part of the Plateau, avoiding the central plain: this because the central area, situated in a lower position than the surrounding ridges, was easily dominated by higher nearby mountain positions and since it was mainly devoted to agriculture and pasture, it offered no covering from enemy observation and shelling. So, even if it was easier to fight and manoeuvre on the central plain, the two armies preferred to face each other on the more rough and difficult terrain north and south of the central area, where covering was easier to find. Therefore inferred the need to create a new set of structures, specific and respondent to military necessities, and to re-orientate the existing traditional ones, to reach the front lines and avoid the central plain.

108 Rochat Giorgio, *La Strafexpedition. Quadro strategico e sviluppo delle operazioni*, in Pozzato Paolo e Corà Vittorio, *1916 – La Strafexpedition*, Udine, Gaspari, 2003, pagg. 13-14

109 Liber Tullio e Leitempergher Ugo, *1914-1918: Folgaria, Lavarone, Luserna, Vezzena, Monte Cimone, Pasubio attraverso una documentazione storico-fotografica*, Trento, Effe Ci Erre, 1978.

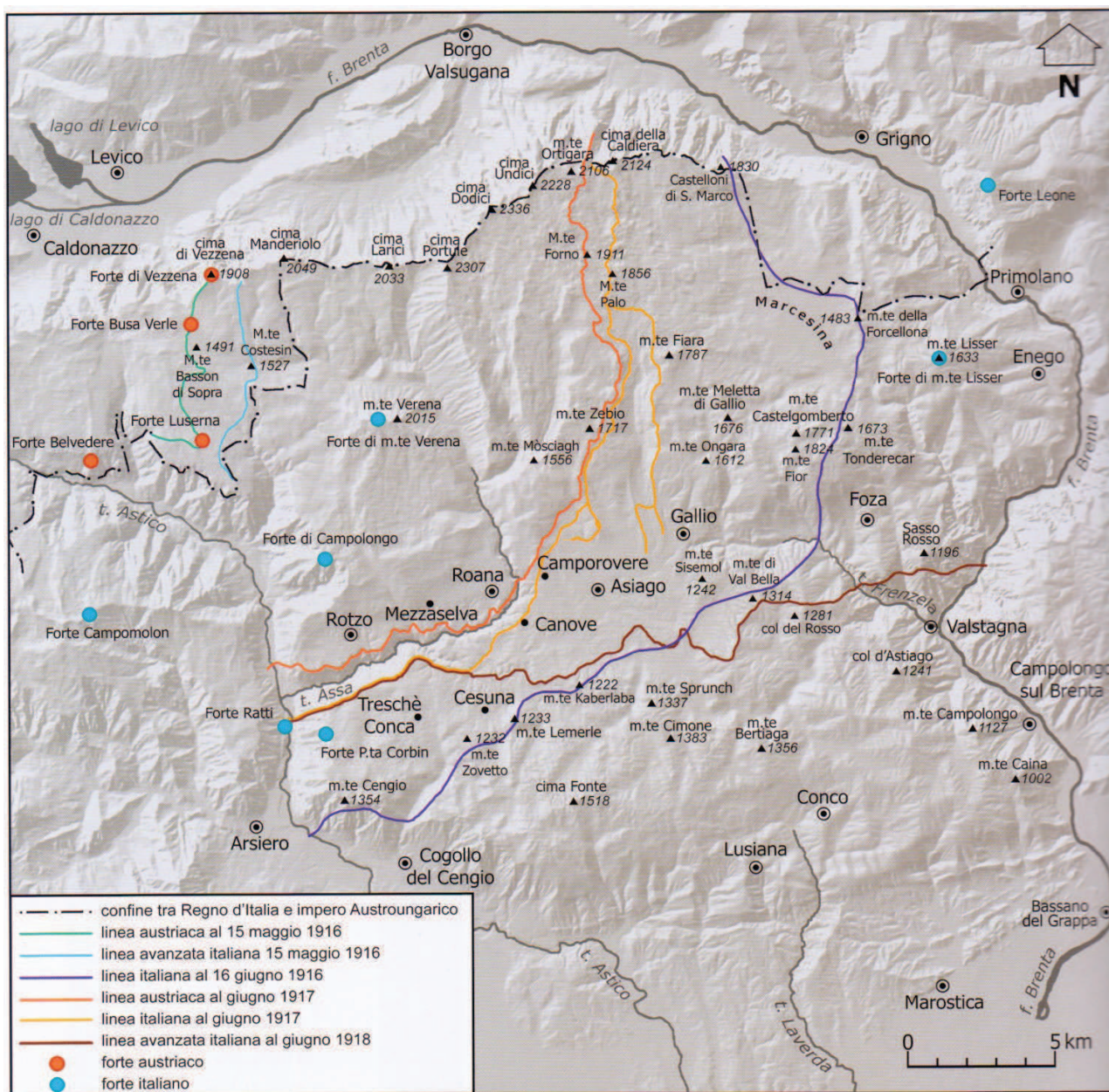


Image 14 Map showing the changes occurred to the front lines during the war: dotted black the frontier at the beginning of the war; green Austro-Hungarian positions and in light blue Italian opposite lines from 24th May 1915 to 19th May 1916; purple maximum Italian withdraw line after Austro-Hungarian Spring Offensive on 16th June 1916; dark orange Austro-Hungarian and light orange Italian opposed lines from 15th August 1916 to 24th October 1917; dark red advanced Italian line from 24th October 1917 to 4th November 1918. [Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 356]

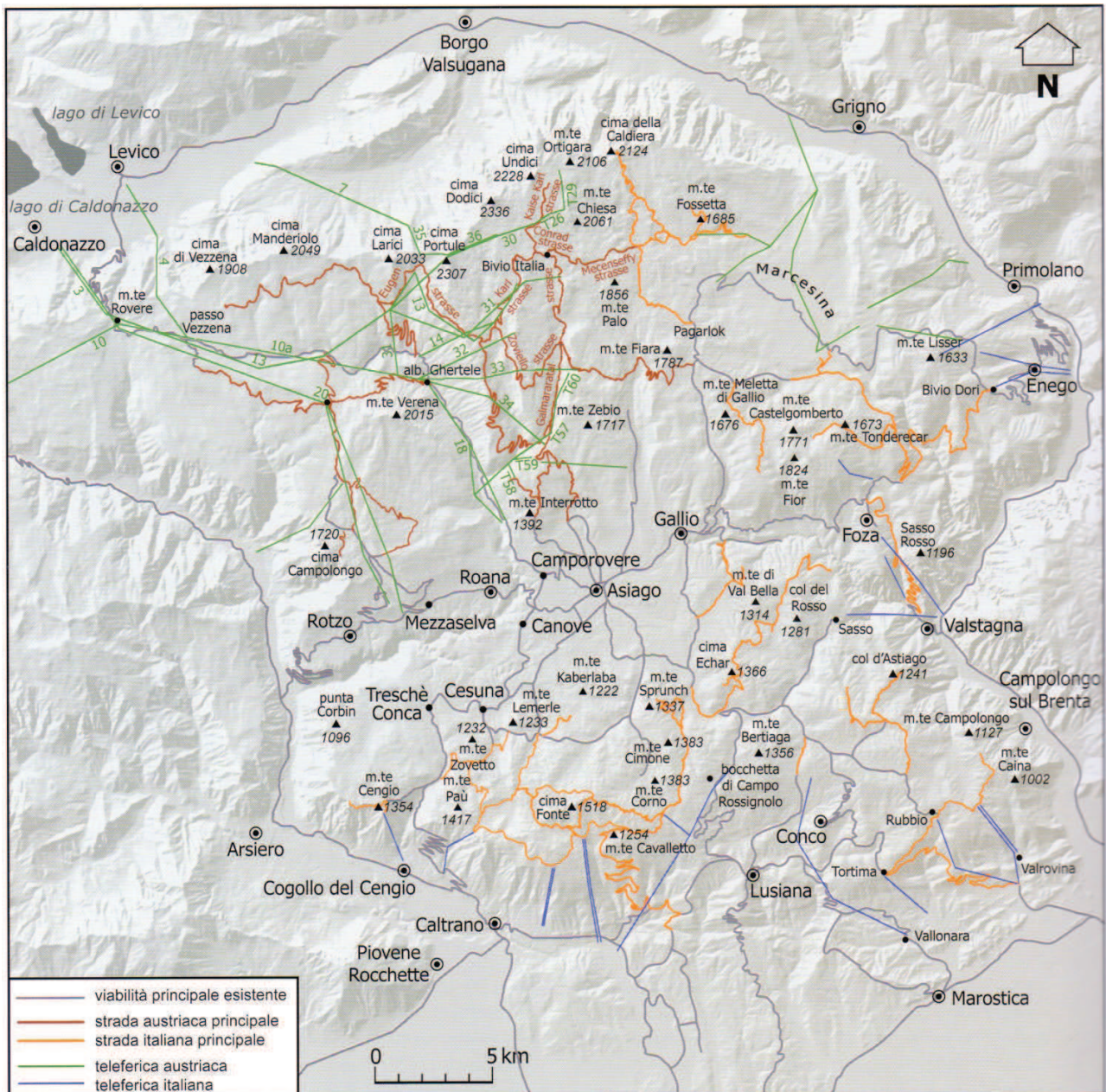


Image 15 The map shows the complex military infrastructure system, both Italian and Austro-Hungarian, developed on the Plateau as of summer 1916: in grey the existing road net, in red Austro-Hungarian and in orange Italian new roads, in green Austro-Hungarian and blue Italian cable ways. It is to be noted how all the new roads and cable ways were built towards the trench lines, mostly avoiding the central plain. [Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 328]

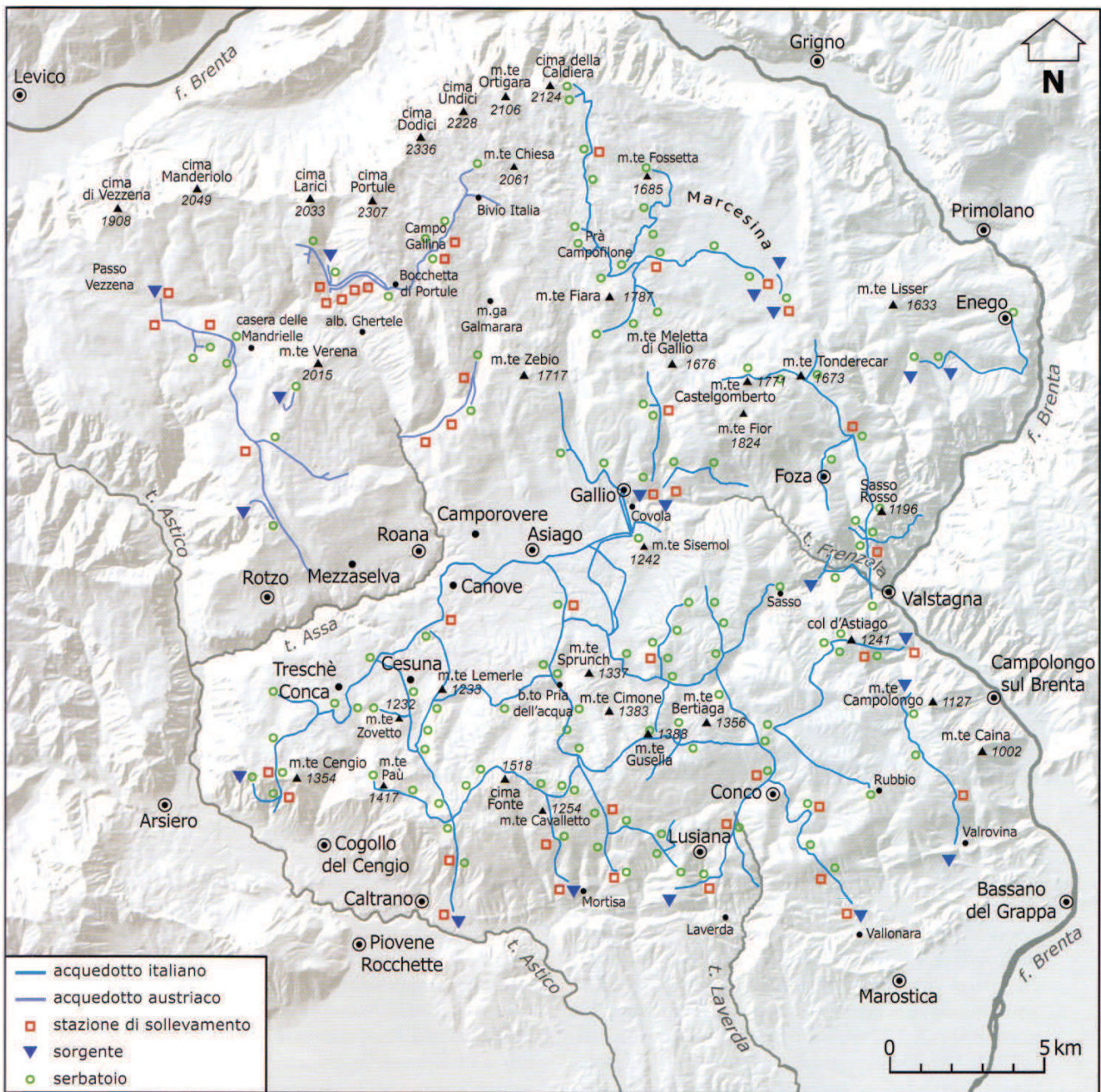


Image 16 The map shows the complex military aqueduct system existing at the end of the conflict. Here again should be noted how most of them were built on the southern part of the Plateau, where none of the traditional villages were located. [Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 329]

*“La necessità di conservare le posizioni conquistate e assicurare la permanenza in zone inospitali di migliaia di soldati garantendo un adeguato afflusso di viveri, munizioni, mezzi e materiali da costruzione per attrezzare e organizzare le linee di difesa, ma anche i ricoveri e i baraccamenti per le truppe, costrinse infatti entrambi gli eserciti ad avviare la costruzione di un imponente sistema di trincee, camminamenti, postazioni d’artiglieria e, contestualmente, a organizzare una estesa rete infrastrutturale di supporto con la costruzione di nuove strade, di impianti di trasporto a fune e a trazione elettrica e la realizzazione di un complesso sistema di acquedotti che rifornivano i numerosi villaggi di baraccamenti disseminati sul territorio.”*¹¹⁰

For the examination of military structurization the same analysis categories already used in the previous chapter will be used. For what concerns the housing structurization can be reminded encampments, for temporary and mobile accommodation, huts, dugouts and forts for the permanent and stable one. Near the front lines, located far from the villages, soldiers resorted to wood or dry-stone huts and cavern dugouts. Behind the lines were confiscated all those structures big enough for troops accommodation like schools, town halls, monasteries and religious buildings; in the lack of structures, troops were housed inside private properties.¹¹¹

“Acquartieramenti, ricoveri ma anche singole baracche erano poi disseminate pressoché ovunque negli anfratti ed avvallamenti del terreno, a ridosso dei rovesci dei rilievi montuosi o in prossimità delle postazioni di artiglieria spesso con un sapiente [...] lavoro di sfruttamento del terreno. Come testimoniano i numerosi resti ancor oggi visibili si tratta di strutture estremamente semplici costruite generalmente in pietra a secco (meno frequentemente in legno) con copertura ad un’unica falda rivestita in lamiera: non mancano tuttavia casi di veri e propri edifici, anche di rilevanti dimensioni, realizzati in muratura intonacata o in tronchi di legno con la tecnica a blockbau che evidenziano una particolare cura sia per

110 Corà Vittorio e Isnenghi Mario, *Guerra sull’Altopiano: la fine di un mondo*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pagg. 330-331: *“The necessity to keep conquered positions and assure the stay of thousand of soldiers on inhospitable locations, with enough supplies of food, ammunitions, building means and materials for dugouts, trenches and barracks, forced both the armies to create an impressive system of trenches, communication trenches, artillery emplacements and, contextually, to implement an extensive supporting infrastructure net by means of new roads, cable ways and aqueducts to supply the numerous hut villages that dotted the landscape.”*

111 Gios Pierantonio, *Parroci e popolazioni nella Prima Guerra Mondiale. Un difficile fronte interno*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 526



Image 17 Austro-Hungarian wooden barracks in Termine [Liber e Leitempergher, quoted, pag. 99]



Image 18 Military hospital at Monte Corno [Vollman Andrea e Brazzale Francesco, *Grande Guerra: britannici sull'Altopiano dei Sette Comuni*, Novale, Rossato Editore, 2012, pag. 75]



Image 19 British field ambulances post in Granezza [Vollman e Brazzale, quoted, pag. 82]



Image 20 Austro-Hungarian hospital in Campo Rosà. Note the church on the left and the pillar of cable way “20” in the background. [Srenghele Delmo, *1914-1918: i protagonisti. Scritti e immagini della Grande Guerra dall'Alto Vicentino*, Velo d'Astico, Stamperia Stenghele, 2013, pag. 349]



Image 21 Austro-Hungarian logistic center. In the middle of the picture is possible to see the pillars of cableways “33” and “10a”; in the upper left center, the white area is the location of Forte Verle; the high mountain in the background is Spitz Vezzena with the namesake fort on top of it.

Image 22 Austro-Hungarian field hospital with blockbau structure in Val Galmarara [Seccia, quoted, pag. 185]



quanto riguarda le tecniche costruttive che gli elementi di finitura.”¹¹²

Several were also the new roads and mule tracks built to supply the front lines.

“Come ricorda Ildebrando Flores nel suo libro *«La Guerra in Alta Montagna»*, edito nel 1934 per le Edizioni Corbaccio di Milano, nel settore orientale dell’Altopiano (XX° Corpo d’Armata) in previsione dell’Offensiva dell’Ortigara, tra l’estate del 1916 e la primavera del 1917 «furono costruiti circa 50 km di rotabili in pochissimi mesi, in una regione montana difficile, dove taluni tratti richiesero numerose opere d’arte per superare burroni e per raccordare dislivelli; tutto questo mentre le artiglierie nemiche davano continui disturbi, che il più delle volte si conclusero con perdite effettive in morti e feriti».”¹¹³

At the end of the war, only the Italian part of the sector counted some 100 km of new roads, 50 km of cable ways, 102 km of aqueducts with 30 pumping stations; all over the Plateau, estimations



Image 23 Austro-Hungarian workers and Russian POWs in a road construction site [Massignani Alessandro e Pozzato Paolo, *Austriaci all’attacco: la Strafexpedition nel racconto dei protagonisti*, Bassano del Grappa, Itinera Progetti, 2006, pag. 104]

112 Corà Vittorio, *L’urbanizzazione e le trasformazioni del territorio dell’Altopiano*, in Pozzato e Corà, quoted, pag. 307: «Huts, dugouts but also single tents were scattered almost everywhere in ground clefts and hollows, on the reverse side of ridges or near artillery emplacements, often with a clever [...] work of terrain utilization. As the numerous ruins still existing testify, they usually are very simple structures built in dry-stone masonry (less frequent in wood) with the roof made of a single pitched metal sheet roof: but there are examples of proper buildings, of noteworthy dimensions, realized with plastered masonry or timber with the blockbau system that shows a particular care both for the building techniques and for the finishing elements.»

113 Idem, pag. 300: “As remembered by Ildebrando Flores in his book *«La Guerra in Alta Montagna»*, printed in 1934 by Milan Edizioni Corbaccio, on the eastern sector of the Plateau (20th Army Corps) in preparation for the Ortigara Offensive, between summer 1916 and spring 1917 «were built nearly 50 km of roads in few months, on hard mountain terrain, where some sections needed brand new structures to get over ravines and to join up altitude gaps; all this while enemy artillery kept shelling, which ended, most of the times, with effective casualties.»”

reports the construction of 400 km of new roads.¹¹⁴

Productive structurization was rather limited near the front lines and mostly composed of sawmills for timber production for barracks beams and planks; ovens for bread and construction sites for war structures. Most of the production structures for ammunitions, weaponry, clothing, food, working materials, communication systems, etc. were located far inland and scattered all over the country, in those factories that already in peace time were producing these goods.

Legitimacy structures were constituted by officers huts and buildings, martial courts, check points between the operation zone and the area behind the lines; churches and clergy, though keeping their legitimacy, were involved in frictions and disagreements with military authorities, as we'll see moreover.

However the most important, complex and pervading structurization was that made of proper war structures, for troops defence (trenches and dugouts) or attack (machine guns and artillery emplacements): an impressive work, which remains are still clearly visible nowadays.

“Dopo il fallimento dell’offensiva del maggio-giugno 1916 che aveva portato alla pressoché totale occupazione della conca centrale dell’Altopiano, i reparti austriaci ripiegarono su di una linea accuratamente pianificata (la cosiddetta Winterstellung). [Questa linea] venne organizzata a difesa tra l’estate del 1916 e l’autunno del 1917 attraverso un’accurata opera di sistemazione del terreno con lo scavo di profonde trincee, di gallerie, postazioni in caverna e il posizionamento di numerose difese accessorie a formare una serie di veri e propri capisaldi collegati tra loro in una ininterrotta linea difensiva. Tra gli altri basta ricordare il complesso sistema di gallerie e postazioni in caverna del Thurmau Tunnel sul monte Chiesa o le analoghe opere realizzate dai fanti del 27° reggimento di Gratz a Monte Forno, e ancora la batteria in caverna dei granari di Bosco Secco o quella, con annesso osservatorio, del caposaldo del Piovan a Castelletto di Rotzo.

[...] Gli italiani, seguendo il ripiegamento operato dagli austriaci, si attestarono sulla catena montuosa antistante, organizzando a loro volta una lunga e poderosa linea di resistenza [...] Ma l’azione italiana si allargò ben presto fino ad interessare pressoché ogni rilievo e ogni valle dell’Altopiano. Tra l’estate del 1916 e l’autunno del 1917, su disposizione del comando supremo, si provvide infatti a rafforzare tutto il nostro fronte, sistemando a difesa, oltre alla già citata linea di resistenza, anche la linea su cui si era arenata l’offensiva austriaca del maggio-giugno 1916 (Melette-Sisemol-Kaberlaba-Lemerle-Zovetto-Belmonte-Cengio) e

114 Corà e Isnenghi, quoted, pagg. 329-337.

creandone di più arretrate fino a raggiungere le pendici meridionali dell'Altopiano."¹¹⁵

Finally, it is noteworthy how most of the war structures like forts, trenches, machine gun and artillery emplacements, observation posts, road blockades, etc. cannot be put inside any of Turco's categories for the study of territorial structurization: to study these artefacts it would be appropriate to develop new analysis categories that keeps into account the state of exception that justified them and their purpose (defensive or offensive) from a military point of view.

ENGLISH TERRITORIALIZATION

An allied contingent was sent to Italy already the day after Caporetto breakthrough, to support Italian troops stopping Austro-Hungarian advance. This contingent was composed of 11th and 14th English Army Corps and 22nd and 31st French Army Corps, initially deployed along the Piave river, north of Venice. Since March 1918 the 14th English Army Corps was sent to the Plateau, between Cesuna and San Sisto (south of Asiago) where it stayed until the end of the war.

Here English territorialization (for the French one there are not enough sources available) and particularly the denomination process will be shortly analysed.

Legitimacy and structurization can be considered equivalent to the Italian ones, both the armies operating inside a state of exception and creating structures for the same war purposes. Denomination, instead, was peculiar: it has been showed how Italian troops, where possible, re-used existing territorial denomination; where impossible or lacking, they resorted to a referential one.

English troops were on foreign land with a different language: re-using traditional denomination was difficult and often caused transcription errors on maps and misunderstandings between commanders. To solve this problem English troops used a referential denomination, like Italians, but also a widespread symbolic one, linked to their culture and homeland toponyms.

115 Idem, pagg. 333, 336: "*As consequence of the failed offensive of May-June 1916, that led Austro-Hungarian troops to occupy nearly all the Plateau, they withdrew upon a carefully designed line (the so-called Winterstellung). [This line] was organized for defence between summer 1916 and autumn 1917, through an accurate work of terrain organization, by means of deep trenches, galleries, cavern emplacements, and the placing of several accessory defences to form a series of strongholds linked to each other through an uninterrupted defensive line. Among others it is enough to remember the complex cavern dugouts and gun emplacements of the "Thurtau tunnel" on Monte Chiesa or the similar works realized by the men of 27th Graz Regiment on Monte Forno, and also the cavern artillery emplacement at Granari di Boscosecco or that, with observatory annexed, of Piovan stronghold at Castelletto di Rotzo. [...] Italians, following the enemy withdraw, reached the opposing ridges organizing as well a long and complex resistance line [...] But the work Italian soldiers quickly enlarged itself involving almost every hump and hollow of the Plateau. Between summer 1916 and autumn 1917, on General Staff order, all the area of operations was reinforced, in addition to the resistance line, also the positions where the Spring Offensive was stopped (Melette – Sisemol – Kaberlaba – Lemerle – Zovetto – Belmonte – Cengio) and by creating new ones to reach even the southern hillside of the Plateau.*"



Images 24, 25, 26 “Tattenham Corner” identified a crossroad near Monte Corno refuge, namesake of the Surrey locality [Imperial War Museum Collection]



Following is an extract of the Gloucester Regiment war diary, describing the action that occurred on 15th July 1918, during the so-called *Battle of the Solstice*, and that exemplify the use of a referential denomination.

*“The Battalion at this time consisted of two composite companies, the left, of the remains of the support company and Headquarters details, holding roughly from H.32.33 to the junction of the track with the road at H.355.360 : the right, formed from the outpost company and a few men from the right front company, held from the latter point to the railway line about H.39.36.”*¹¹⁶

In the footnote the author says: *“There is no other way in which to describe these positions, save by co-ordinates: the French system of co-ordination was used in this instance.”* As visible, referential denomination here is pushed to the extreme: English troops lack a deep knowledge of the terrain

¹¹⁶ Wyrall Everard, *The Gloucestershire Regiment in the War: 1914-1918*, London, Methuen & Co., 1931, pag. 339



Image 27 Map of the English sector on the Plateau, between the village of Cesuna and Turcio crossroad. Note the pervading denomination English troops did on communication trenches and military roads. [Sandilands H. R., *The 23rd Division 1914-1919*, Edinburgh, William Blackwood & Sons, 1925]

and thus the only way to orientate themselves, locate and describe their position is through geographic coordinates. It was unthinkable, for the lack of proper technology, and useless for traditional territorialization to reach such a precision on the description and localization of a point on the space that was not related to a terrain “irregularity”.

Another peculiar characteristic of English territorialization was to denominate also the trenches and communication ways from the front lines to rear: the complexity of the trench system developed during the war, a maze where easily someone could get lost, induced troops there located to give names to these structures, as is done for streets in cities and villages.

TERRITORIALIZATION CONFLICTS

At the beginning of the war on the Plateau existed two territorial actors, which cohabitation induced frictions due to the radically different project they were implementing. If traditional territorialization may be definite as a self-centred process since “*processo messo in atto e gestito da una collettività insediata per definire la propria qualità sociale, assicurare il proprio funzionamento e garantire la propria riproduzione*”¹¹⁷, the military one, that starts to form at the beginning of the conflict, can be considered out-centred since “*si ha quando il processo di*

¹¹⁷ Turco Angelo, *Africa subsahariana: cultura, società, territorio*, Milano, Unicopoli, 2002, pag. 116: “*process implemented and managed by a community to define its social quality, assuring its own functionality and guarantee self-reproduction.*”

territorializzazione sfugge, in tutto o in parte al controllo della società locale, diventando in qualche modo il prodotto di un altro corpo sociale e, di riflesso, delle sue condizioni d'esistenza."¹¹⁸

The coexistence of the two territorializations, self- and out-centred, "*traduce al suolo una relazione disimmetrica tra corpi sociali*".¹¹⁹

This coexistence configure itself as a "scission" during pre-war period since, as showed in the previous chapters, military territorialization is located at the fringe of the traditional one and doesn't have nearly no contact with it, except for the passage of troops through the central plain. With war, however, this coexistence became "integration": the two territorializations coexisted and the traditional one "*assume un ruolo nel dispiegamento [del processo] eterocentrato*".¹²⁰

"Secondo le testimonianze sia di don Grandotto che di don Guido Mazzocco, sacerdote in servizio presso il Duomo di Asiago, ci fu una normale coabitazione tra le due istituzioni [militare ed ecclesiastica]; la [C]hiesa diede il suo apporto e l'ospitalità ad alcuni reparti all'interno delle canoniche o in altre proprietà ecclesiastiche, dato che gradualmente l'altipiano in previsione di una futura guerra con l'Austria Ungheria si stava popolando di militari."¹²¹

The period of "integration" between the two territorializations anyway was not painless and conflicts arose among them: legitimacy and representation modalities differed substantially, making coexistence more and more difficult.

The relation with the clergy was particularly troubled and source of numerous incidents, due to the widespread anticlerical feelings among army officers.¹²²

"Nel 1914 poi, con l'inizio delle ostilità tra gli Imperi centrali e l'Intesa, mentre l'Italia restava ancora in posizione di neutralità, Asiago e l'Altipiano cambiarono aspetto: le piazze,

118 Idem: "*it occurs when the territorialization process escapes, partially or totally from local community control, becoming in a way the product of another social corpus and, by reflex, of its existence conditions.*"

119 Idem, pag. 117: "*transpose on the ground an asymmetric relation between social corpora.*"

120 Idem: "*took on the role of implementation of the out-centred [process]*"

121 Malatesta, *Una regione...*, quoted, pag. 365: "*According to the testimony of father Grandotto and father Guido Mazzocco, in service at Asiago cathedral, there has been a normal cohabitation of the two institutions [the military and the ecclesiastic]; the Church gave its support and hospitality to some of the contingents inside rectories or other ecclesiastic properties, since the Plateau – in anticipation of a future war against Austria – was getting more and more crowded of soldiers.*"

122 Isnenghi Mario, "*Col primo Colpo Asiago l'è stato colto...*": *geografia letteraria dell'Altopiano in guerra*, in Righi e Varotto, quoted, pag. 339; Malatesta, *Una regione...*, quoted, pag. 363

le vie, le mulattiere brulicavano di soldati i quali, occupate le caserme e requisiti gli alberghi, i patronati parrocchiali e le case private, incominciarono con i loro comportamenti liberi e disinibiti a scompaginare la vita morale e religiosa delle popolazioni."¹²³

Soldiers present on the Plateau didn't restrain themselves to profanity, harass local women, revelry and squalls but they openly taunted religious and civilian institutions by staining the crucifix of Piazzetta Croce in Asiago, the occupation of San Rocco church, the interruption of the Great Procession in May.¹²⁴

"La serie di insuccessi spinse i vertici militari a cercare un capro espiatorio, ad inventare un comodo diversivo per confondere l'opinione pubblica, manovrata dalla grande stampa nazionale. E l'espedito si trovò: fu promossa una campagna di accuse contro le popolazioni locali che furono tacciate di neutralismo, di austriacantismo, di intelligenza col nemico e di spionaggio. Bastava allora che un residente qualsiasi fosse dell'opinione che l'Austria non era affatto allo stremo delle forze, perchè finisse in prigione. «Quegli parla cimbro? Ha comunione coll'Austria: lo si metta in catene. Un terzo attende in bosco a raccogliere legna? È una spia: lo si ponga al sicuro»."¹²⁵

Search and questioning begun against local clergy like father Salbego of Gallio, Zecchinati and Bortolo of Rotzo and father Scalabrin of Mezzaselva because of homilies they made about the war. At the beginning of June 1915 the false news of some fathers using their bell towers to send signals to the Austrians were publicized. With this charge were put under arrest, between the end of June and the beginning of July, father Grandotto of Cesuna, Berto of Canove and Vezzano of Camporovere. In the same days were put under arrest with the charge of espionage Antonio Fabris, teacher in Cesuna, the innkeeper Lucia Panozzo of Conca, the bell ringer Gio Maria Ambrosini and the farmers Antonio and Fortunato Mosele and Cristiano Spiller. On 4th August begun the trial in

123 Gios, quoted, pag. 526: "In 1914 then, with the beginning of hostilities between the Central Powers and the Allies, while Italy was still keeping her neutral position, Asiago and the Plateau changed face: plazas, streets, mule tracks got flooded of soldiers that, occupied barracks and confiscated hotels, rectories and private houses, begun with their libertine and licentious behaviour to upset moral and religious life of local inhabitants."

124 Idem, pagg. 526-7

125 Idem, pag. 528: "The series of military defeats moved military commands to look for a scapegoat, to fabricate an easy distraction for public opinion, controlled by the big national media. And the expedient was found indeed: a campaign of charges over local population was promoted, allegedly of neutralism, pro-Austrianism, contact with the enemy and espionage. Therefore was enough for a resident of the Plateau to express his opinion about Austria not being near the collapse to be put in jail. «Is he speaking Cimbrian dialect? He's in contact with Austria: put him under arrest. A third man is waiting in the woods collecting wood? He's a spy: keep an eye on him.»

Verona which ended with the absolution of all of them due to lack of evidences or crime. But they were not set free: the civilians were sent to the prisons of Castel di Sangro at L'Aquila and in Penna di Teramo, while the clergy was sent to Lucera.¹²⁶ This is one of the examples that can be made on the influence of the state of exception over ordinary trials.

With the ongoing of military operations, and particularly after 15th May 1916 with the Spring Offensive, the coexistence configure itself as “dislocation” of traditional territorialization, by mean of the forced evacuation of the inhabitants: the asymmetric relation became that of “domination” as “*l'attore esterno assume la responsabilità totale del processo, sostituendosi all'attore locale.*”¹²⁷ The army doesn't have any other obstacle to the implementation of its own territorial project, being now able to change local denomination and structurization, as needed by military necessities.

A RAFFESTIN-LIKE POINT OF VIEW

An important contribution to the study of territorial process has been introduced by Prof. Claude Raffestin in his book *Per una geografia del potere*¹²⁸: differing from other theories that accounts territoriality as a non-spatial strategy (Robert Sack, Torsten Malmberg)¹²⁹, Raffestin insert territoriality inside the problematic of *relation* and *power*, developing his key concepts of strategy, mediation, labour, energy/information and territory.¹³⁰ The Swiss professor describes territoriality as:

“Insieme delle relazioni che una società intrattiene con l'ambiente fisico e l'ambiente sociale per soddisfare i suoi bisogni con l'aiuto di mediatori in previsione di ottenere la più grande autonomia possibile¹³¹ [entro i limiti del sistema].¹³²”

Whereas relation is the exchange and/or transmission of energy and/or information; mediator the

126 Idem, pagg. 530-2; Malatesta, *Una regione...*, quoted, pagg. 366-374

127 Turco, quoted, pag. 117: “*the external actor take on himself the complete responsibility of the process, taking the place of the local actor.*”

128 Raffestin Claude, *Per una geografia del potere*, Milano, Unicopoli, 1981.

129 Klauser Francisco R., *Thinking through territoriality: introducing Claude Raffestin to Anglophone sociospatial theory*, in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(1), pag. 1

130 Bertoincin Marina e Pase Andrea (a cura di), *Territorialità*, quoted, pag. 11; Klauser, *Thinking*, quoted, pag. 1

131 Bertoincin e Pase, quoted, pag. 16: “*Set of relations that a society maintain with the social and physic environment to satisfy its needs with the help of mediators, in order to achieve the maximum autonomy possible [within the system limits].*”

132 Klauser Francisco R., *Rethinking the Relationship between Society and Space: A Review of Claude Raffestin's Conceptualisation of Human Territoriality*, in http://www.nuigalway.ie/research/ssrc/documents/territoriality_working_paper_francisco_klauser.pdf, pag. 1

sum of knowledge and competences that actors possess and use to create representations and actions: they can be anything like instruments, symbols, codex, techniques, representations, languages, norms, etc.; autonomy is *“la capacità di mantenere relazioni aleatorie con l’esteriorità e l’alterità o, in altre parole, la capacità di fare delle scelte”*.¹³³

Keeping in mind these elements, the quote just reported can be written as an equation:

$$A (P-M-L) \rightarrow R \rightarrow S (S_n/S_o) = T/T_a$$

Where:

- A, the actor;
- P, the program, conceived as the set of feasible intentions and of aims or objectives;
- M, the mediators;
- L, the labour, that can be intended as a combination of energy and information;
- R, the relation;
- S_n, natural space, organic (flora and fauna) and inorganic (the soil);
- S_o, social space;
- S, the environment;
- T, the territory created by the actor upon the environment;
- T_a, the set of relations created by the actor upon the territory, in other words territoriality.¹³⁴

“T” can be considered the material, visible part of territoriality (structures, symbols, etc.), and “T_a” the intangible part, in other words the relations. Liken territoriality to an embroidered fabric, “T” is the exterior and visible part of the embroidery and “T_a” the interior, where the weave can be seen.

More concretely, territorialization can be conceived as a process that:

*“Appropriandosi concretamente o astrattamente (rappresentazione) di uno spazio, l’attore lo «territorializza». Per costruire un territorio, l’attore proietta nello spazio un lavoro, in altre parole energia e informazione, adattando le condizioni date ai fabbisogni di una società o di una comunità.”*¹³⁵

133 Klausner, *Rethinking*, quoted, pag. 18-20; Bertoncin e Pase, quoted, pag. 16: *“the ability of keeping aleatory relations with alterity and exteriority, in other words, the ability of making choices”*

134 Raffestin Claude, *Il concetto di territorialità*, in Bertoncin e Pase, quoted, pagg. 23-24

135 Idem, pagg. 22-23: *“Seizing factually or in the abstract (through representation) the space, the actor «territorialize» it. To create a territory the actor projects labour over the space, in other words energy and*

Applying these concepts to the present case of study, it is possible to make the following connections:

- A, the actor, corresponds to the army as a whole or as single units;
- P, the program of national defence and annexation of the “Terre Irredente”;
- M, the mediators, made of uniforms, war propaganda posters, martial decrees, war announcements and bulletins, requisitions, check points, restrictions to freedom of movements, etc.;
- L, the labour in the two forms of energy (the work of soldiers on the front lines, of workers in military factories and of burden animals, explosives, fuel, electricity, etc.) and information (censorship, trench journals, espionage, maps, terrestrial and aerial observation, etc.);
- Sn, the natural environment, represented by the Plateau, its woods, grasslands, animals and trees;
- So, the social environment, represented by the local population until its evacuation;
- T, the territory created by the army with its trenches, gun emplacements, streets, mule tracks, aqueducts, cable ways, hut villages, dugouts, etc.;

To the definition of territoriality given by Raffestin, and quoted by Bertoncin and Pase, I added “within the system limits”: in fact, one of the preliminary operations of the territorialization process is the outlining of spatial boundaries inside which the actor can carry out its own territorial project. Space compartmentation allows the actor to establish rules of inclusion/exclusion, who can get inside and who not of the creating territory.

“[...] il limite è un segno o più esattamente un sistema semico utilizzato dalle collettività per segnare il territorio: quello dell’azione immediata o quello dell’azione differita. Ogni proprietà o appropriazione è segnata da limiti visibili o no, reperibili nel territorio stesso, o in una rappresentazione del territorio: piano catastale o carta topografica.”¹³⁶

information, adapting the given conditions to the needs of a society or a community.”

136 Raffestin, quoted, pagg. 169-170: “[...] The limit is a sign or more precisely a semantic system adopted by a collectivity to mark the territory: that of immediate action and that of deferred action. Every property or appropriation is marked by visible or not limits, that can be found in the territory itself, or inside a representation; cadastre plan or map.”; vedi anche Bertoncin e Pase, quoted, pagg. 13-14

Elsewhere Raffestin specifies that the boundary, in turn, is made of mediators available to the actor and of norms and uses that can forbid specific behaviours.

“[...] the limits of social actors’ autonomy are somehow pre-defined by institutionalized social norms, which are regulating social actors’ relationships to alterity and to exteriority.”¹³⁷



Images 28 Italian Check point [Collection of Museo Centrale del Risorgimento, Roma]

Military territory is characterized by a strong inclusivity/exclusivity relation and the boundaries are established precisely and are highly visible. It's a gender specific territory: only men – and only if they are soldiers – are allowed to be inside of it: those who are not part of this category must have a pass to get and move inside the area of operations. Barbed wire and check points assure the impermeability of this boundary; the awareness of the danger related to war operations, furthermore, act as intangible deterrent to unauthorized access.

The territory so delimited is then internally organized to better manage relations, resources exploitation and to contain the dispersion of energy/information. This organization is composed of three elements:

¹³⁷ Klauser, *Rethinking*, quoted, pag. 18, 20, 21

- Frame, corresponding to a delimitation of space inside the territory, made by the actor following his needs and aims, and that allows him to create smaller homogeneous areas: frames can be economic, social, racial, religious, political, productive, etc.;
- Hub, intended as a concentration point of resources, people and relations: cities and towns are the classical example;
- Net, is a circulation system between hubs made of men, resources and relations.¹³⁸

For what concerns the army, frames create different areas depending on several elements: the military unit appointed to it (Army, Army Corps, Division, Brigade, Regiment, Battalion, etc.); the sanitary service and the user base of each hospital; steps and march distances; artillery range; etc. Hubs are represented by depots, logistic camps, barracks, tent camps, battery emplacements, airfields, railway stations, headquarters and command posts, etc.; eventually the net is made of roads, mule tracks, railways, cable ways, telegraph lines, etc. that allows the movement of troops, materiel and informations inside the territory.

The following images intend to represent graphically the concept of frames, nets and hubs: the first picture is about traditional territorialization before the war while the other three are about three key moments of the war on the Plateau, precisely May 1915, June 1917 and October 1918. The images are the result of a photo composition based on maps available on the website of the *Geoportale Nazionale*¹³⁹: the two base layers are a digital model of the terrain at 20 metres and a DeAgostini map, scale 1:100.000 at 90% of transparency; for the image related to the traditional territorialization, another layer was added with the administrative boundaries as in 2011 (they didn't change much from 1914). Added elements are: in red the frames, in blue the hubs and yellow the links.

¹³⁸ Torricelli, quoted, pag. 5

¹³⁹ <http://www.pcn.minambiente.it/>

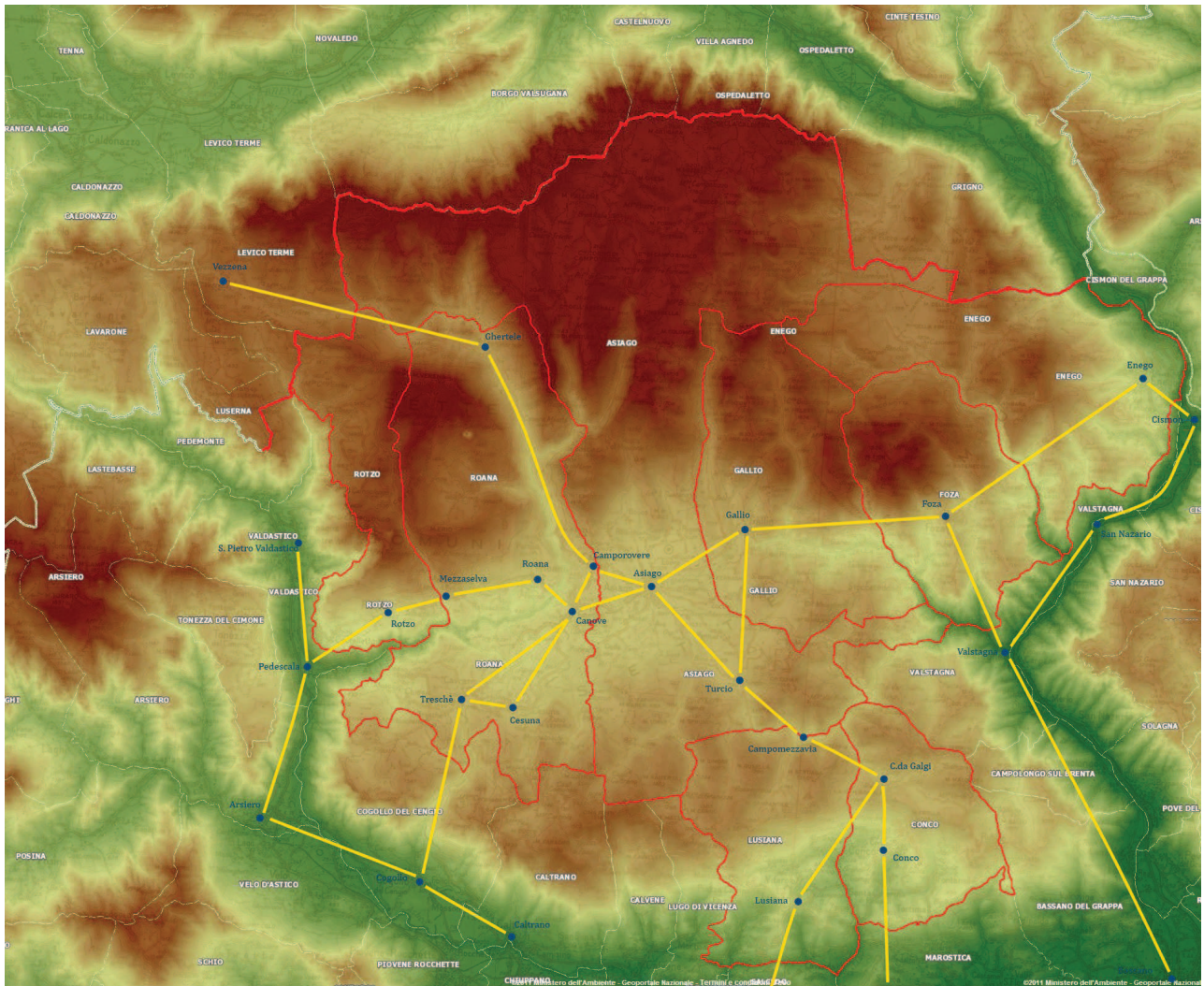


Image 29 The traditional territorialization before the war: villages (blue) are concentrated in the central plain (except for Lusiana and Conco), area more suitable for agriculture and easier to cultivate. The main road axis follows roughly a east-west (from Rotzo/Treschè to Eneigo) and north-south (from Vezzena to Lusiana) direction. Administrative boundaries, intended as the limits of traditional territorialization, do not correspond with the physical boundaries of the Plateau: particularly on the north-eastern sector (Marcesina plain), for a long time contended with the village of Grigno and which is still under the Province of Trento, reveal the contrasts occurred in the past between bordering territorializations. Eventually it is to note the scarcity of roads in the upper and lower part of the Plateau.

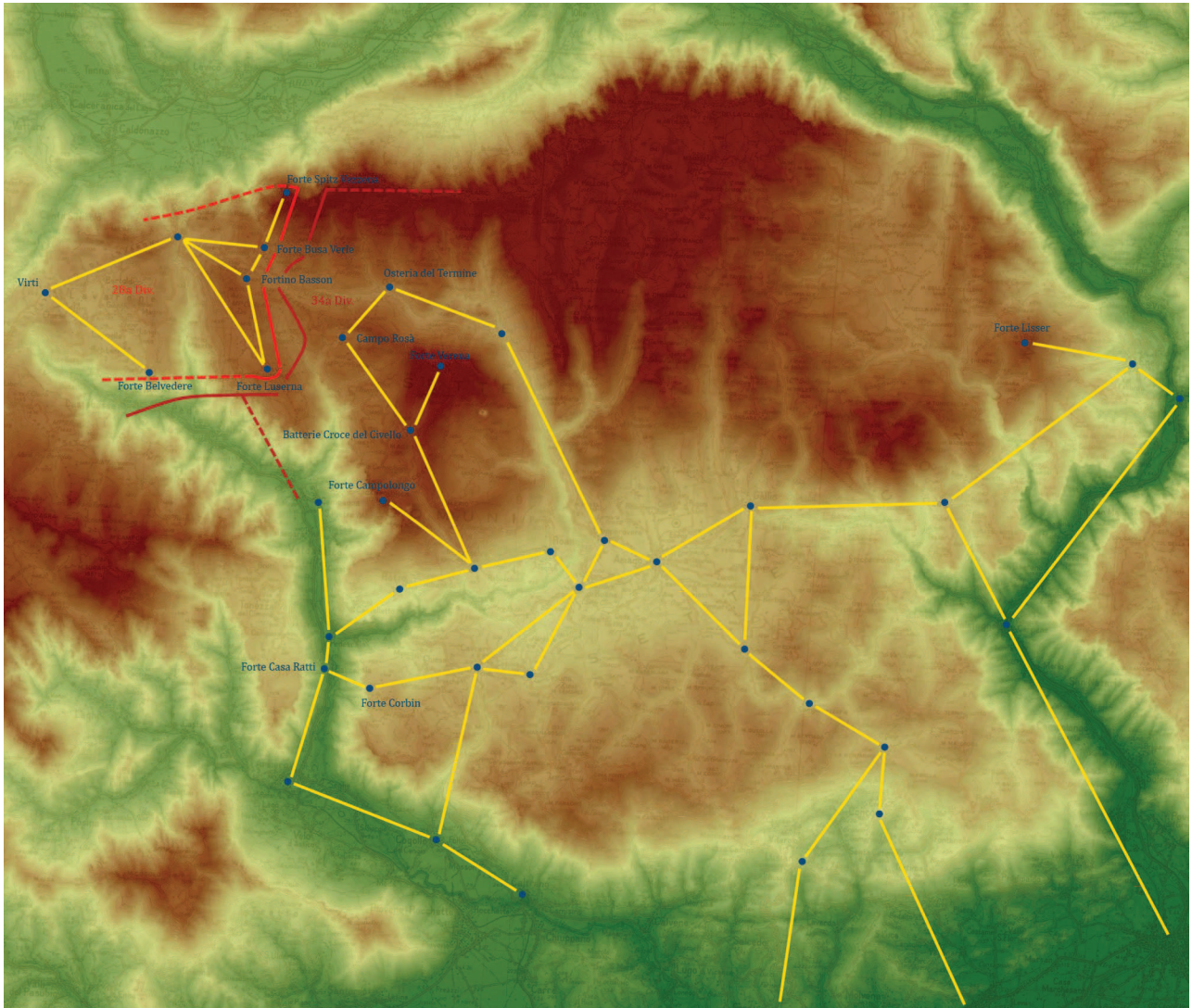


Image 30 The situation in May 1915: to traditional structurization the military one has been added, concentrated mainly on the north-western sector, near the State border. Here are located the main fortifications (Casa Ratti, Punta Corbin, Campolongo and Verena for the Italians; Luserna, Busa Verle and Spitz Vezzena for the Austro-Hungarians) other than artillery emplacements and logistic centers (Croce del Civello, Campo Rosà, Termine, Virti). In the case of the army the frames are based upon the division on the ground between military units in charge of the area (34th Italian Division and 28th Austro-Hungarian Division). In this period the two territorializations coexist without relevant accidents and the military structurization exploit and integrate the existing traditional one to reach those hubs the army recently created.

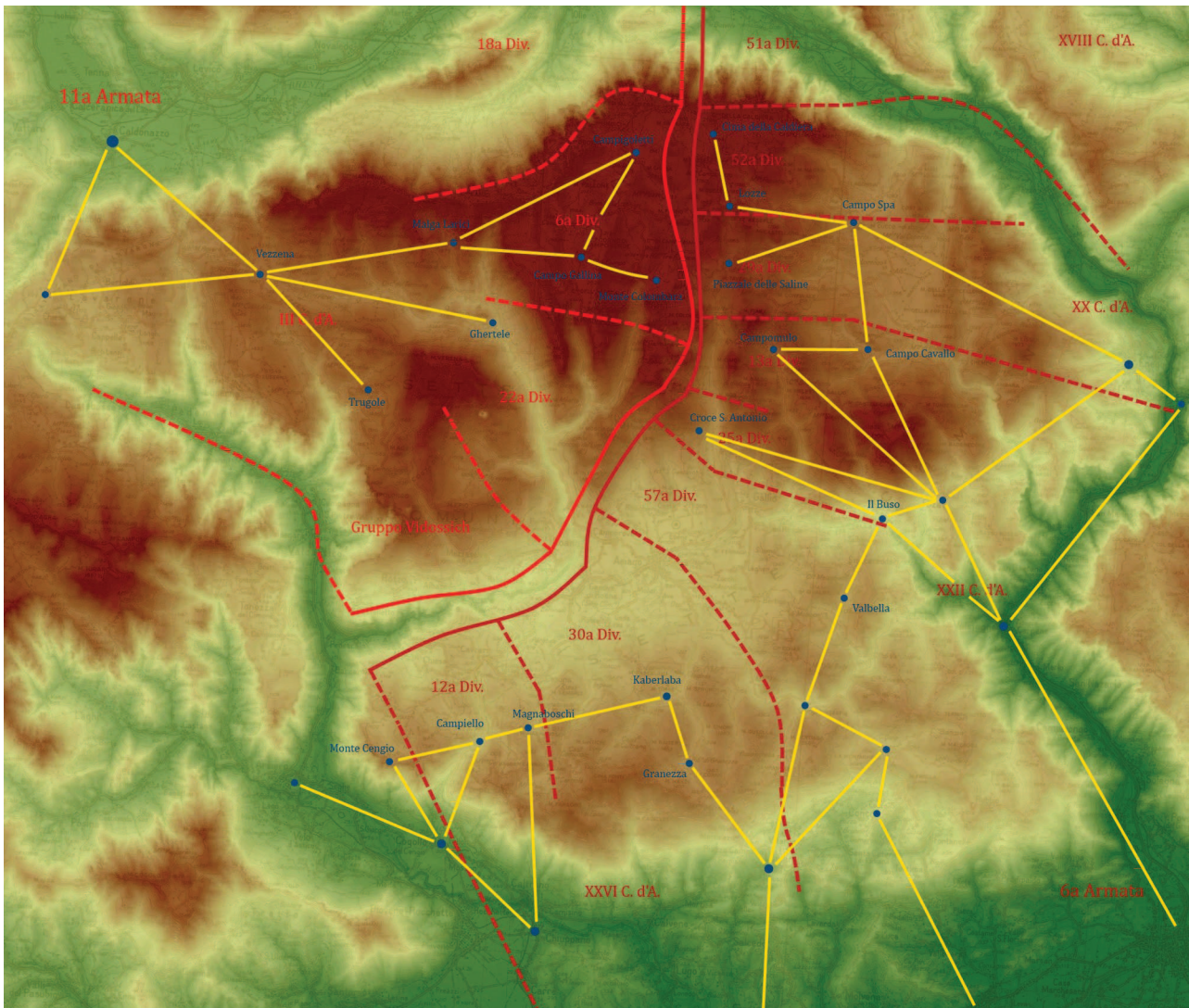


Image 31 The situation in June 1917: after the Austro-Hungarian Spring Offensive of May-June 1916 the local population is forced to flee the Plateau, that is now completely inside the zone of operations. Manoeuvres are concentrated mainly in the northern and southern sector of the Plateau, to take tactical advantage of the terrain “irregularities” there existing. Consequently military structurization is concentrated in these areas, while the traditional one is demolished so not to favour the enemy or integrated inside the military infrastructure. Logistic centres, roads, military artefacts are created brand new over areas that traditional territorialization mostly avoided because of the rough terrain.

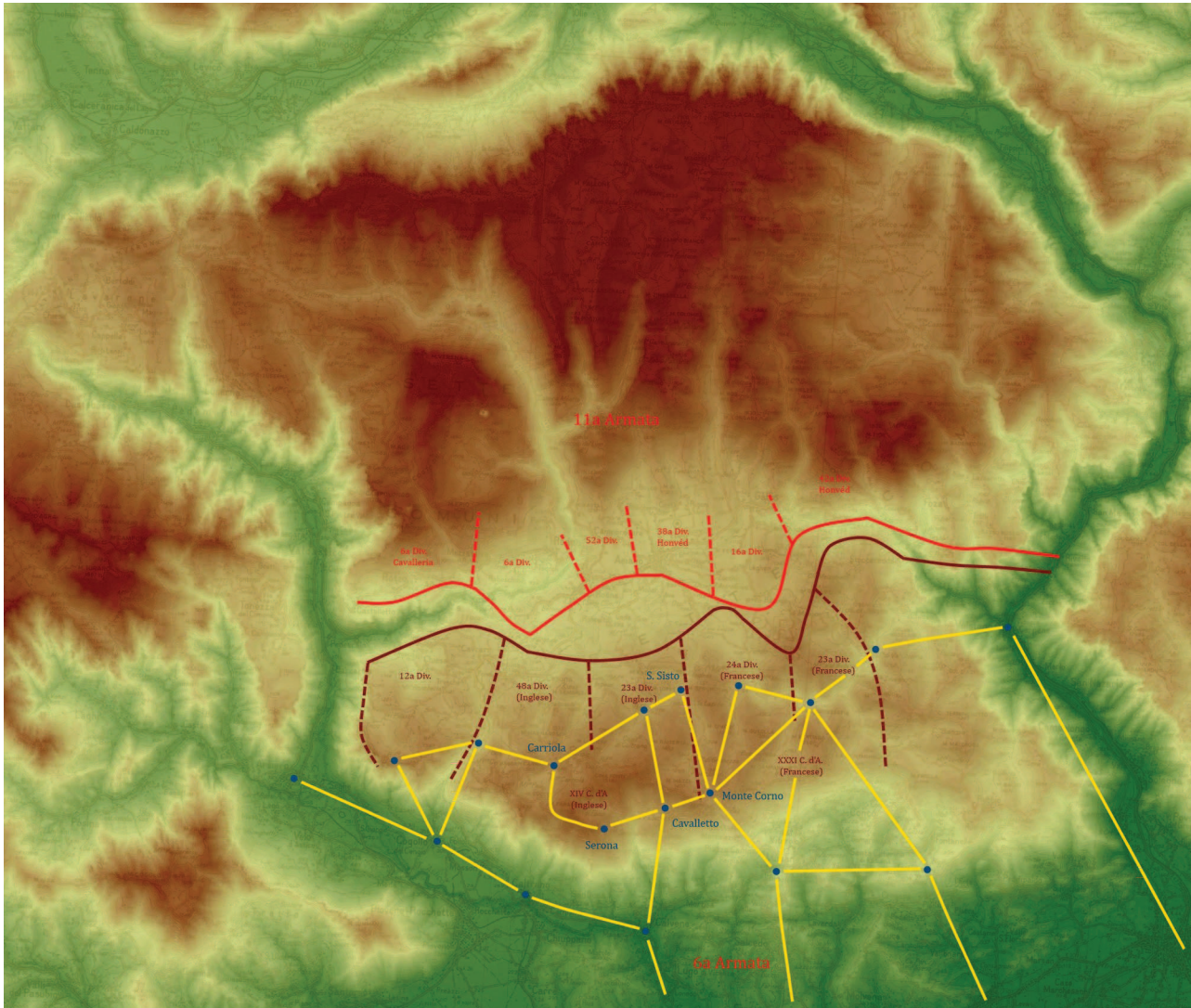


Image 32 The Plateau in 1918: after Caporetto breakthrough on the Plateau a tactical withdraw has been made. Italian and allied structurization is now concentrated on the remaining part of the Plateau, forming a complex network of roads, trenches, cable ways and aqueducts that bring up supplies from the plain below. In the map the Austro-Hungarian structurization is not showed because of a lack of sources about it. The situation remained the same until the end of the war when local population got back to the Plateau and resume the territorialization process, partly demolishing and partly integrating what was left of military structurization.

CHAPTER V

RE-TERRITORIALIZATION: RECONSTRUCTION, REIFICATION, RECOVERY

Exactly one year after Caporetto Breakthrough, on 24th October 1918 began the so-called “Battle of Vittorio Veneto”, the last big battle between Austria-Hungarian and Italian armies of the First World War. Imperial troops, despite turmoils and nationalistic uprisings in the country, were able to keep Italian assaults at bay for a week along all the front. Since 30th October, however, Austrian troops began to teeter under incessant Italian attacks and began the withdrawal from Piave western bank. On the Plateau, troops under Gen. Montuori and the allied ones, forced the front on 1st November, encountering only slight resistance from the Austrian rearguards. Already the following day elements of the First Army reached Rovereto, the Sixth freed completely the Plateau and the Fourth was stoutly advancing through the Valsugana towards Trento. Austrian withdrawal was by now a general rout and so the Austro-Hungarian High Command decided to end the fights signing, on 4th November 1918, the armistice: after four years the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Italy came to an end.

War left behind wide destroyed areas, littered with weapons, deeply changed in their infrastructures and use of the terrain: trenches marked the ground like scars, lonely broken trees and ruins testified the existence of woods and villages now wiped out. The farmers that, just concluded the conflict, got back to their land had to face a territory absolutely unfamiliar: beside the reconstruction of villages, structures and the recovery of the ground, began the re-territorialization process, in other words the factual and transcendent appropriation of the territory, by its inhabitants.

*“Ogni ciclo di territorializzazione è un’integrazione non distruttiva di nuovi equilibri territoriali e ambientali: i cicli non sono pervasivi, ma sono forme di attualizzazione del patrimonio ereditato. Dopo una fase [deteritorializzazione] di rottura in cui i terreni cambiano il proprio aspetto fisico e cercano un nuovo significato simbolico, ha luogo uno stadio di “riterritorializzazione”: il ciclo posteriore si alimenta dal precedente, ma in modo originale, re-interpretandolo e strutturandolo in forme diverse, secondo i suoi nuovi modelli culturali.”*¹⁴⁰

140 Magnaghi Alberto, *Una metodologia analitica per la progettazione identitaria del territorio*, in Rappresentare i

RECONSTRUCTION

The first refugees came back on the Plateau already in the afternoon of 4th November, as soon the news of the armistice was spread. Despite still being war zone¹⁴¹ and so forbidden to civilians without pass, some of them were able to elude the controls through uncontrolled tracks.¹⁴²

*“Ma quando giunse sulle alture della Klama rimase impietrito: niente più era rimasto di quanto aveva nel ricordo e che aveva conservato per tanti mesi nella nostalgia dell’anima: non erba, non prati, non case, né orti, né il campanile con la chiesa; nemmeno i boschi dietro la sua casa e il monte lassù in alto era tutto nudo giallo e bianco. L’insieme sembrava la nudità della terra dilaniata, lo scheletro frantumato. I gas, le bombe di ogni calibro, le mitragliatrici in tre anni avevano distrutto anche le macerie, ed era questo che i suoi occhi vedevano e la ragione non voleva ammettere.”*¹⁴³

To these refugees some others followed, but the lack of houses and the incipient winter persuaded the most to postpone the comeback. By mean of the Royal decree 41 of 19th January 1919 was created the *Ministero per le Terre Liberate dal Nemico* (Ministry for the freed lands) with the aim of *“dirigere e coordinare l’opera di tutte le amministrazioni pubbliche per quanto si riferiva alla ricostruzione della ricchezza nazionale e alla piena efficienza produttiva dei territori annessi all’Italia durante la prima guerra mondiale.”*¹⁴⁴ Together with the Ministry was working the Corps of engineers, under the command of Lieutenant General Luigi Pollari Maglietta: he was in charge

luoghi. *Metodi e tecniche*, Alinea, Firenze, 2001. p.33: *“Every territorialization cycle is a non-destructive integration of new environmental and territorial balances: cycles are not pervasive, but are forms of actualization of inherited heritage. After a phase [de-territorialization] of rupture where terrains change their physical aspect and look for a new symbolic meaning, occur a re-territorialization stage: the following cycle feeds upon the previous one, but in an original way, rethinking it and structurizing in different ways, following the new cultural models.”*; see also Bertocin Marina e Pase Andrea, (a cura di), *Territorialità. Necessità di regole condivise e nuovi vissuti territoriali: atti del Convegno, Rovigo, 8-9 giugno 2006*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007, pag. 26

141 State of war was suppressed only on 2nd September 1919 with Royal decree 1505: during the period between the armistice and this date, on the former front were still deployed the Corps of engineers and some POWs occupied in the recovery and reconstruction process, which justified the maintaining of the state of war. The disposition for the passage from state of war to state of peace were contained in Royal decree 1389 of 30th September 1920.

142 Rigoni Stern Mario, *La ricostruzione (1919-1921)*, in Stella, quoted, pag. 553

143 Rigoni Stern Mario, *Storia di Tönle; L’anno della vittoria*, Torino, Einaudi, 2003, pag. 7: *«But when he got on the Klama hills he became speechless: nothing was left of what he remembered and that he kept in the homesickness of the soul: not grass, not lawns, not houses, nor gardens, nor the bell tower with the church; not even the woods behind his house and the mountain up there was all naked yellow and white. All together seemed the nudity of the Earth torn apart, the skeleton smashed. Gases, bombs of all dimensions, machine guns in three years had destroyed even the ruins, and this was what his eyes were seeing and the reason won't admit.»*

144 <http://www.guidageneralearchivistato.beniculturali.it/> at the voice “Terre Liberate”: *“supervise and coordinate the work of all public administrations on reconstructing national wealth and the full productive efficiency of the territories annexed to Italy during First World War.”*

PIANTA DELLA NUOVA ASIAGO

Piano regolatore della ricostruzione di Asiago
Progetto dell'Ufficio Tecnico Comunale (Ing. G. Girardi e A. Lazzari)

Originale aggiornato e ridotto da Silvio Pesavento Landi



Image 33 Final design of the new Asiago Urban Plan, done by Armando Lazzari and Girolamo Girardi. [Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 364]

of the reconstruction of villages, public buildings, reparation of roads, bridges, river banks and land clearing from unexploded bombs. For this job he deployed POWs not yet repatriated and militarized workers. Eventually, local administrations entrusted themselves as well of the quick reconstruction of the villages.

*“Già nei primi mesi del 1919, il commissario per i Comuni di Asiago e Roana Livio Carrara aveva affidato all’ingegner Girolamo Girardi di Bassano l’incarico di approntare uno studio di Piano Regolatore per la Ricostruzione dei paesi distrutti e di provvedere all’insediamento, sia nel capoluogo che nei comuni di Gallio e Foza, di un apposito ufficio tecnico per gli accertamenti dei danni di guerra. La direzione degli uffici venne assegnata al cav. Armando Lazzari [...]. Contestualmente venne attivato un ufficio provvisorio del genio Militare, al comando del tenente generale ing. Pollari Maglietta, che avviò la riparazione dei principali edifici pubblici (il duomo, il fabbricato allora destinato ad ospedale e l’edificio scolastico) oltre ad alcuni ulteriori fabbricati residenziali non completamente distrutti. Vennero inoltre realizzate una serie di baracche in legno e laterizio per dare una prima provvisoria sistemazione ai profughi e agli stessi uffici comunali.”*¹⁴⁵

Distresses for those refugees just arrived were several: shortage of drinkable water, since all public aqueducts were destroyed or re-oriented towards military structures, and bread, since ovens were not rebuilt yet. Cultivating was nearly impossible since all the fields were still busy of trenches and barbed wire, corpses and bombs. In these conditions the recovery was rather hard and the Ministry of freed lands was slow in giving the refunds, the entity of which was still under survey. In 1919 the Ministry appointed to the Plateau just 25 sheep.¹⁴⁶

Nevertheless the work went smooth: the endorsement of urban plans and the assignment of the areas to rebuilt to every inhabitant allowed the release of funds and the opening of many building sites.

145 Corà Vittorio, *«Ex insigne splendidior»: la ricostruzione di Asiago*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 365: “Already in the first months of 1919, the commissioner for the municipalities of Asiago and Roana Livio Carrara gave to engineer Girolamo Girardi of Bassano the assignment of designing an urban plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed villages and to create, in the administrative centre as well as in the villages of Gallio and Foza, a technical office for the inspection of war damages. The management of these bureaus was given to Armando Lazzari [...]. At the same time was opened a temporary office of the Corps of engineers, under the command of Lieutenant General Engineer Pollari Maglietta, that begun the recovery of the main public buildings (the church, the hospital and the school) as well as some other private buildings slightly damaged. A series of wood and brick huts were realized to give a first temporary housing to the refugees and the municipal bureaus.”

146 Rigoni Stern, *La ricostruzione*, quoted, pag. 565

*“Dopo la definitiva approvazione dei piani regolatori, durante l’inverno 1920-1921, furono veramente gettate le basi per la rinascita di Asiago e dell’Altopiano con il tracciamento delle strade, delle piazze e degli isolati e la progettazione edilizia dei nuovi fabbricati.”*¹⁴⁷

The reconstruction of villages was done with a rationalistic idea, that aimed to create a better allocation of buildings and quarters and to chart wide and straight streets. Therefore on the Plateau the original traditional housing structurization was replaced by buildings with a light Art Nouveau style.

*“[...] venne infatti completamente ridisegnata la maglia viaria allargando le strade e le piazze e regolarizzandone i profili. Conseguentemente, il nuovo Piano impose la riorganizzazione e la razionalizzazione della struttura degli isolati cancellando definitivamente l’assetto irregolare e asimmetrico che caratterizzava il vecchio abitato.”*¹⁴⁸

From this point of view the reconstruction can be thought as an out-centred territorialization process: no more military, as was during the war, but civilian. At the end of 1921 the recovery was almost completed and two years later, on 25th February 1923, the Ministry of freed lands was suppressed and its duties delegated to the competent administrations.

If the reconstruction of the villages went rather quickly, the recovery of the woods, one of the main resources of the Plateau, required a lot more time: out of the 18.656 hectares estimated before the conflict, only 2.860 resulted without war damages. Since 1921 began the work of reforestation that, in first instance, was aimed to the cleaning of the ground from war materiel and level off the trenches. Then, as of 1925 enough little plants were available from the local nurseries and so began the second stage, of true reforestation. Already in the early Thirties, thanks to the use of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), rustic, strong and prolific tree, the reforestation was at a good point and nowadays the woods are in constant autonomous expansion.¹⁴⁹

It is important to highlight, at this point, how the army, over its four years stay on the Plateau,

147 Corà, quoted, pag. 366: *«After the final approval of urban plans, in the winter 1920-1921, truly were created the basis of the rebirth of Asiago and of the Plateau, with the construction of streets, plazas and quarters and the design of new buildings.»*

148 Idem, pagg. 365-366: *«[...] in fact the streets network was completely redesigned, widening streets and plazas and adjusting the outlines. Consequently, the new urban plan imposed the reorganization and rationalization of quarters structure, deleting definitively the irregular and asymmetric set that characterized the old village.»*

149 Zovi Daniele, *Foreste del Novecento: distruzioni, ricostruzioni e nuovi indirizzi selvicolturali*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pagg. 233, 239-240.



Image 34 English map showing Austro-Hungarian trenches in 1918: note the widespread military structurization of the Plateau at the time. [Sandilands H. R., quoted]

profoundly modified the existing traditional territory: maximum expression of this were all the military infrastructures created for war purposes.

Of all these structures – trenches, cable ways, barracks, dugouts, machine gun and artillery emplacements – none of them were useful to local territorialization, except some roads and mule tracks: consequently, where needed, most of these structures were demolished, especially on pastures and plough fields. But then, as showed, military territorialization was more pervasive on the areas north and south of the central plain where less present was traditional territorialization: the reconstruction left those areas as they were, because of the difficulties recovering the ground, with trenches often dug in the rock, and their uselessness in the view of local practices of land use. It is in these areas that still nowadays, after a century from the conflict, is possible to see and visit ruins of the First World War structurization.

REIFICATION

In his study of sub-saharian Africa, Turco dedicates part of the study to the analysis of the missed reification of some terrains as part of the territorialization process. Missed reification happens, e.g., in presence of plant species useful to humans, that are safeguarded because of their economic or healing value, and in those places appointed with spiritual value, like sacred woods, kept for religious purposes.

A similar phenomena, of missed reification, might be found on the Plateau at the end of the war, in those structures like cemeteries, ossuaries and sacred areas.

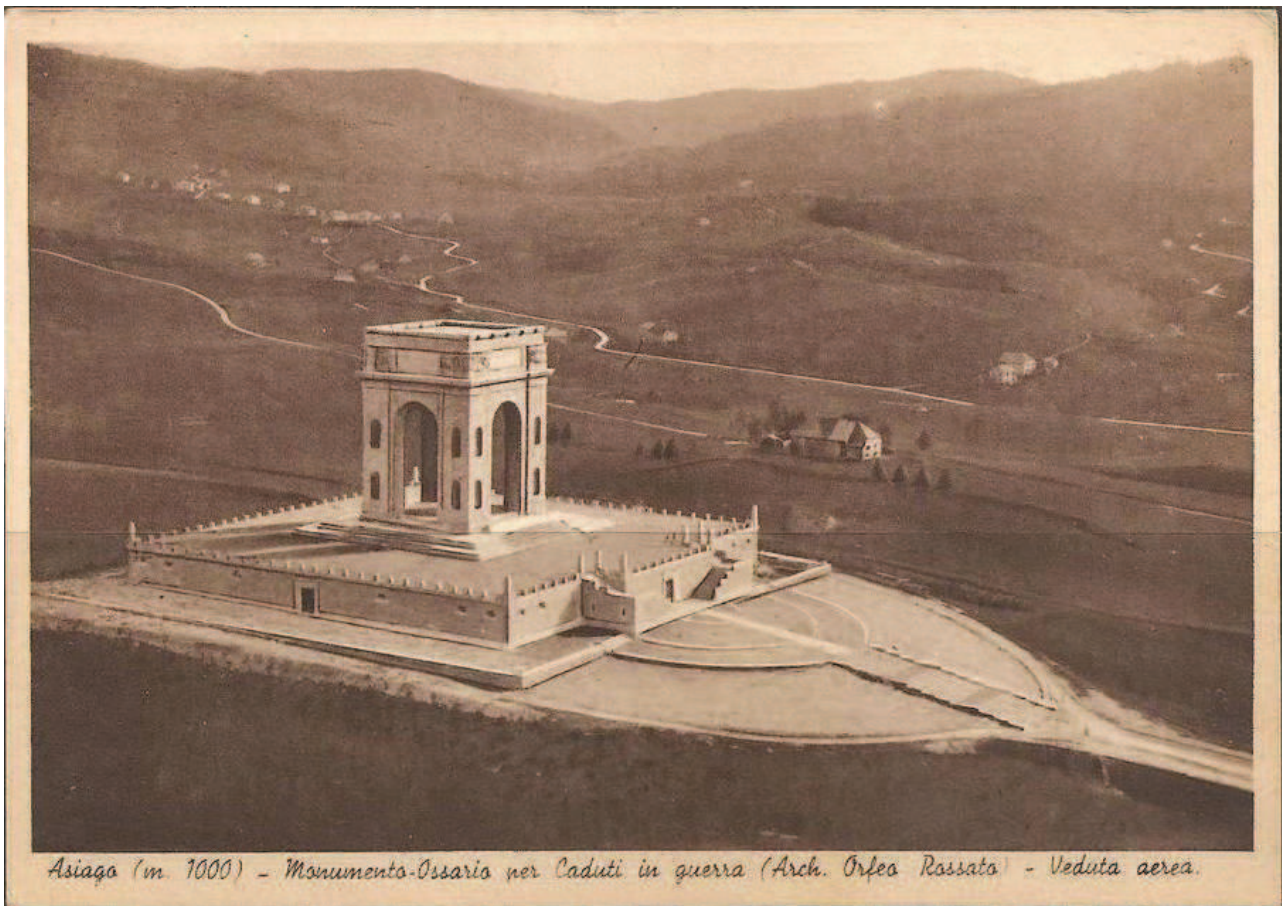


Image 35 Historical picture of Asiago ossuary [Collection F.lli Bonomo e Figli, Asiago]



Image 36 Austro-Hungarian military cemetery of Slaghenaufi, Lavarone Plateau [<http://static.panoramio.com>]

Already during the conflict, the impossibility of moving all the soldiers corpses inside civilian cemeteries, forced troops on the front line to reserve a space for burial grounds. At the end of the war the Plateau was dotted with 41 war cemeteries of different dimension, mostly close to former war field hospitals.¹⁵⁰ In 1932 Fascist government started the construction of the monumental ossuary in Asiago, intended to gather all fallen soldiers in one big structure, on the Leiten hill east of the town. Completed in 1936 the corpses were moved inside in 1938. Since that moment were left in place only the cemeteries of Brigata Sassari for Italians, the three of Moschiag for Austria-Hungarians and all the five English ones.

Other than the ossuary, several structures were built, mainly votive chapels, on the places that saw fierce fightings: on Monte Lozze for the Ortigara fallen, at malga Fossetta and on Monte Cengio.



Image 37 Road sign marking the border of the sacred area of Monte Ortigara.

However, for some locations of the Plateau, another solutions had to be adopted. Already during the conflict became clear that, especially after big assaults, was impossible to recover and bury all the corpses, and many of them were left in no man's land. The high number of corpses scattered over the ground and the impossibility of their recover persuaded the government to declare this areas “sacred”. Locations like Monte Ortigara, Monte Campigoletti, Cima della Caldiera,

Monte Zebio, Monte Lemerle, Monte Cengio were declared “sacred areas” by mean of Royal legislative decree 1386/22 (later abrogated by law 534/67, and by Legislative decree 66/2010).¹⁵¹

Beside sacred areas created to safeguard the main battlefields were also created town parks functional to the new civic religion of the cult of the fallen soldier¹⁵², like Remembrance Park and Brigata Regina Park (now Millepini) in Asiago.

All these are areas taken away from traditional re-territorialization, created and imposed from

150 Cremonini Luciano, *I cimiteri militari della fascia sud-est dell’Altopiano dei Sette Comuni*, in “4 Ciacole fra noialtri de Conco”, n.° 64, Tipografia Dal Maso Lino, Marostica, dicembre 2005, pag. 1.

151 “Established by the abrogated Royal legislative decree 29th October 1922, number 1386, to consecrate for the future centuries the gratitude of the Country towards her sons that for her greatness fought epic battle in the war of redemption 1915-1918” [Legislative decree 66/2010, art. 252]. It is interesting to note that the areas identified for this purpose in 1922 were just four, so not to obstruct the reconstruction/re-territorialization process of the areas the war devastated: “The wide extension of our front, equally generous of patriotic sacrifices, left uncertain over the choice. In the same time, a wise criterion of public economy suggested to reduce the areas devoted to cult in order to extend the lands useful to the profitable work of farmers and to the fruitful work of reconstruction.” [Royal Legislative decree 1386/22, Relation of His Highness the president of ministries council to His Majesty the King, in the consultation of 29th October 1922, over the legislative decree for the declaration of monumentality of some of the areas more exemplar for glory splendour in the war theatres of 1915-1918]

152 Mosse George, *Le guerre mondiali: dalla tragedia al mito dei caduti*, Roma, Laterza, 2008 [Mosse George, *Fallen soldiers: reshaping the memory of the world wars*, Oxford University, 1991]

above and that keep, until nowadays, a trace of the military territorialization concluded a hundred years ago.

RECOVERY

With the conclusion of the conflict what was left of military territorialization came under a process of recovery, chronologically distinguishable in two – rather different – phases.

The first phase covers roughly the years between the first and second postwar period. The presence of unexploded bombs and metal made materiel, still widespread despite the work of land clearance, was exploited by local population since its comeback as a source of income, to increase the poor subsistence living that usually characterize the Plateau. The “iron harvest” and the sell of metal scraps made of copper, lead, brass, etc. became one of the most common activities on the Plateau in this period: in Mezzaselva, between 1926 and 1935, all men of the hamlet were busy in this activity.¹⁵³

The “iron harvest” was then institutionalized in 1935, as consequence of international economic sanctions following the invasion of Ethiopia and the autarchic economic politic, when Fascist government promoted this activity by mean of the campaign “Gold and Iron to the Motherland”.

This peculiar occupation went on until the Sixties, when the quick economic development created widespread wealth, higher salaries and better lifestyle: the “iron harvest” therefore lost importance, because of the low profits and high danger; it is still carried out nowadays as recreational – illegal – activity by some people.

This recovery practice left as well its mark on the territory, visible in at least two toponyms: Busa della pesa (Hollow of the weighbridge) near Monte Forno, where the metal scraps were weighted before being sold to traders, and Fontanello del recuperante (Spring of the iron harvester) near Buse magre di Busette. Moreover, several monuments and commemorative stones are scattered all over the Plateau, to remember the ones perished in this dangerous activity.

The second phase of recovery regards the process of safeguard and promotion of the First World War historical heritage present on the Plateau, with a tourist and educational tone.

The chronological range of this phase covers the years from mid-Nineties until nowadays: in 1996 member of the Parliament Prof. Flavio Rodeghiero presented a law project on protection and promotion of the Great War structures ruins over the entire country. On 7th March 2001 was promulgated the law on “Safeguard of the First World War historical heritage” that permitted the

153 Menegatti Luigi, *Il salario della paura: la vicenda dei recuperanti*, in Rigoni e Varotto, quoted, pag. 368

legislative organization of all the recovery interventions on war artefacts.

*“Dopo la promulgazione della legge n. 78/2001, le quattro Comunità dell'Alto Vicentino (Reggenza Sette Comuni, Leogra-Timonchio, Alto Astico-Posina e Agno-Chiampo) e la Provincia di Vicenza hanno costituito, mediante la stipula di una apposita Convenzione, uno specifico gruppo di lavoro al fine di riunire ed integrare in un unico Programma Generale gli interventi previsti dal "Progetto Ortigara" elaborato dalla Comunità Montana dei 7 Comuni e dal "Progetto dell'Ecomuseo delle Prealpi vicentine" nel frattempo predisposto dalle altre tre Comunità Montane utilizzando allo scopo la cospicua mole di informazioni raccolte grazie alle campagne catalografiche realizzate in applicazione della legge regionale n. 43/97.”*¹⁵⁴

Now, the historical heritage of the Great War is scattered all over the Plateau and the creation of a museum out of it, in the classical sense of putting the artefacts inside a covered structure with a specific organization, is not only impossible (most of the structures are anchored to the ground) but would also take the artefacts out of their context. Hence the idea of creating an *en plein air* museum, a so-called *ecomuseum*, that permits visitors to go on the spot and see the structures in their original location.

*“La tutela e la valorizzazione di questo patrimonio è qui presentata attraverso l'ecomuseo della grande guerra delle prealpi vicentine; un museo sull'ambiente e sull'uomo in cui l'analisi e l'interpretazione delle drammatiche vicende che si sono compiute, ha senso solo in rapporto alla lettura di questo straordinario territorio storico. L'obiettivo generale che il progetto persegue è quello di una «messa in opera della memoria» che punti a recuperare, prima ancora dei resti materiali, la testimonianza dei fatti. Un approccio «leggero» volto a conservare e rendere leggibile ciò che ancora rimane delle opere realizzate dagli eserciti belligeranti durante la Grande Guerra.”*¹⁵⁵

154 http://www.ecomuseograndeguerra.it/veneto/prealpi_vicentine/it/p_generale.php: “After promulgation of law 78/2001, the four communities of higher Vicenza province (Reggenza dei Sette Comuni, Leogra-Timonchio, Alto Astico-Posina and Agno-Chiampo) and the province of Vicenza created, by mean of a specific agreement, a working group aiming to gather and improve inside a General Program all the interventions set with the “Progetto Ortigara”, made by the Mountain Community of the Seven Municipaliities, and the “Ecomuseum of Vicenza Prealps Project”, in the meantime created by the other three Mountain Communities, using for the purpose the conspicuous amount of information collected thanks to the artefacts surveys done in conformity of regional law 43/97.”

155 http://www.ecomuseograndeguerra.it/veneto/prealpi_vicentine/it/ecomuseo.php: “The safeguard and promotion of this heritage is here represented by the Ecomuseum of the the Great War of Vicenza Prealps; a museum of the environment and the people in which the analysis and interpretation of the dramatic happenings that occurred here,

In order to be less invasive and keep the original aspect of the artefacts as much as possible, the interventions are limited to the cleaning and structural maintenance of the structures and their promotion by means of notice boards and various promotion and marketing means.

It is worth to note that one of the reasons why choice fell on an eco-museum implementation is because it allows local population to take part in its creation and preservation, which helps integrating it in the territorialization process.

“Di solito gli ecomusei [...] sono promossi da soggetti locali, quali istituzioni, imprese o cittadini, che partecipano anche all’allestimento e alla gestione.”¹⁵⁶

The ecomuseum as well can be studied using the analysis categories developed by Claude Raffestin, in other words by means of frames, hubs and nets, as demonstrated by Costa (probably involuntarily).

“L’ecomuseo è strutturato come una sorta di rete, solitamente è presente un nucleo centrale adibito all’accoglienza dei visitatori e dove trovano sede le funzioni amministrative. [...] L’ecomuseo pertanto unisce questi singoli nodi, seguendo un allestimento legato alle specificità del contesto in cui è localizzato, oltre agli obiettivi che la comunità locale si è posta di realizzare. Uno di questi è la conservazione del patrimonio e della cultura della gente del posto, oltre all’ambiente naturale in cui si trovano i beni in esame. Ecco che l’ecomuseo è lo strumento attraverso il quale una comunità locale porta a conoscenza dei terzi la propria memoria e storia, anche produttiva, fattori di un’identità e di un’immagine territoriale ben definiti. Un altro fine che si pone questa istituzione museale, è di carattere didattico - formativa, poiché insegna a leggere e conoscere il territorio a cominciare dai segni lasciati dagli avvenimenti passati. La seconda funzione riguarda il recupero, la valorizzazione di aree dismesse e la riqualificazione ambientale. Poiché gli ecomusei nascono in luoghi in cui prima erano situate attività produttive o di altro genere, sono uno strumento appartenente a progetti di riuso e contribuiscono a dare valore alle aree dismesse.

have a meaning only in relation with this extraordinary historical place. The project general purpose is that of a «materialization of memory» pointed to the recovery, even before of the material ruins, of what happened. A «light» approach intended to preserve and making understandable what still remains of the structures created by the fighting armies during the Great War.”

156 Costa Elisa, *Il rilancio del turismo montano nella direttrice del turismo culturale. L’ecomuseo della Grande Guerra nelle Prealpi vicentine*, tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Verona, Facoltà di Economia, a.a. 2007-2008, pag. 63: “Usually ecomuseums [...] are promoted by local subjects, like institutions, enterprises or citizens, that take part also in the creation and management [of it].”

*Ecco perché sono considerati come strumenti di sviluppo locale, che passa attraverso la riqualificazione dell'ambiente in cui sono collocati.*¹⁵⁷

So the current territorialization of the Plateau is the result of the integration of postwar local territorialization and what is left of the military one: a noteworthy amount of structures and toponyms in constant re-shaping between preservation of the past and new territorial developments.

157 Idem, pagg. 64-65: *“The ecomuseum is structured as a sort of net, usually is present a central core used as visitors reception and administrative centre. [...] So the ecomuseum links these single hubs, following a set-up functional to the peculiarities of the location and to the goals that local population had set for it. One of these is the preservation of local culture, heritage and environment where the goods are located. Therefore the ecomuseum is the mean used by a community to show visitors its own memory and history, identity factors and a territory image sharply defined. Another goal set for this museum is more educational: it teaches how to read and understand the territory, starting from the traces of the past. The second function is recovery, promotion of disused areas and environmental re-qualification. Because ecomuseums are created upon former production areas or similar, they are a mean to give back value to disused areas. This is why they are considered as a mean of local development that pass through the environmental re-qualification of the areas were they are located.”*

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this study on military territorialization of Asiago Plateau during the First World War, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

The analysis categories developed by Turco and Pase permitted to study both local and military territorializations and so answer positively to the starting question of this paper, in other words whether the army can be considered a territorialization actor.

Agamben and the state of exception introduced the study to the zone of law anomie created by the state of war and that allowed the army to implement its long lasting and pervading territorial project, bestowing the commanders with wide juridical powers.

The investigation of National Defence Plans and the military point of view over terrain “irregularities” showed the representation modalities of space of the army.

Furthermore the study of Asiago Plateau history and of its territory highlighted the outcomes of a long period traditional territorialization process. It has been shown how the firsts signs of military territorialization, represented by the forts for border control, did not influenced that much local territory, as neither did the first battles of 1915, fought far from the most populated areas of the Plateau. But the ongoing war and the following extension of the battlefield all over the Plateau brought deep changes of the local territory, that was destroyed, re-shaped and integrated into the military one. Villages were ruined, grasslands and ridges marked with deep trenches and new barracks were created far from the central plain, hidden in the woods and slopes of the northern and southern part of Asiago. New roads, mule tracks, aqueducts and cable ways were built to supply all the troops present on the Plateau, now completely shaped by the army.

The following period of reconstruction and re-territorialization process, despite destroying and changing part of the existing military structures, was not able to remove them completely: the integration of the military territory into the new local one became a peculiar characteristic of the Plateau, still visible nowadays. With the upcoming centenary commemorations, the ruins of war territory are subject of a new interest, that put them at the centre of recovery and promotion projects.

For what concern territorialization during the Great War there is a crucial aspect of the conflict that contributed to the development of a military territorialization, and it is the static nature of the war. In fact, previous and following wars maintained a certain mobility, whereas the First World War saw bitter fightings carried on for long periods over the same location: it was therefore inevitable

the creation of a vast and pervading structurization to foster and supply troops crowding the front lines. This doesn't change the fact that during Eighteenth century and for the rest of the Nineteenth other conflicts brought to the creation of a military territory, particularly during sieges. Therefore what has been shown in this paper might be used to examine military territorialization also in other context and periods.

In chapter four Claude Raffestin's theories described in his *Per una geografia del potere* have been just touched: the author in his volume express many other aspects of power and its relations with territory. Energy, labour, information are factors that can be further analysed and applied to the army and the territory it creates during wartime: censorship, ciphered messages, uniforms, militarized workers, are just some of the connections possible with Raffestin's categories.

Eventually it is worth to note how the army is always present in modern European – and non-European – societies: even during peacetime exists military territories, ruled under different law, clearly delimited and accessible only to specific people. Barracks, fortifications, military harbours and airfields, training and shooting fields, are just some of the typically military structures that characterise the territory created by the army and that are placed side by side – but clearly distinguished form – the civilian territory.

The present paper might be of help for those approaching to military territorialization study, of its implementation and development during war- and peacetime.

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