

# Abstracts

Christa Hämmerle

*Dealt with and confirmed – or not? Local administration and military service in Austria-Hungary (1868–1914/18)*

Much more than was the case with any previous recruitment system, the introduction in December 1868 of general military conscription for all eligible males in Austria-Hungary required the constant involvement and support of the local communal administration. As this article illustrates, the parish (Gemeinde) was invested with a wide range of controlling functions and duties in connection with this system's implementation and administration, although these were only fulfilled with varying amounts of delay. For this reason, a number of compilations of relevant laws and advisory handbooks intended for local community heads appeared after 1868, which explained how to exercise the massively extended set of obligations with regard to the new army law. Despite the numerous obstacles and recruiting problems arising, the new system led to a militarisation of society in large parts of Austria-Hungary – through the very fact alone that the local administration exercised authority to an unprecedented extent in military matters, thus transmitting the law's intentions to the men directly affected. The article focuses on the complex conflicts of interest and discrepancies between local regions and their inhabitants on the one hand, and the higher authorities on the other hand. These conflicts were to continue, even though the military, whose area of competence encompassed the entirety of the Dualist state, was increasingly able to assert itself over civil society in the period under investigation – a trend that would develop still further, and with fatal consequences, during the First World War.

Wencke Meteling

*Regiments as a decisive factor in local images: regimental history and the example of the garrison town of Frankfurt an der Oder as a case-study in regional military history*

The main argument of this article is that army regiments could act as a decisive factor in determining the image of a particular locality. The value to a town of having a garrison stationed there went beyond straightforward socio-economic factors. Garrison towns formed military 'sociotopes' with their own particular culture, which spread over the town's hinterland, and even throughout the whole surrounding region. By focusing on two prominent infantry regiments and the brandenburgian garrison town of Frankfurt an der Oder, the author investigates the significance of the military for local society from the 1860s to the 1920s.

At the same time, the article offers a framework for using regimental history as a way of researching regional military history, in which theoretical approaches, problems and methods from the fields of social and cultural history are all employed. In particular, the regimental historical approach provides a methodological hinge for linking the micro- and macro-historical levels. The author employs three fields of activity pertaining to the regiments stationed in Frankfurt an der Oder – ‘power and representation’, ‘peace, security and order’, and ‘entertainment and sociability’ – in order to analyse which values the regiments embodied, and whether they acted in a socially integrative or disintegrative way.

Marco Mondini

*Small ‘fatherlands-in-arms’: the Great War and the construction of the myth of the Alpine regiment*

The narrative construction of the legend of the Italian Alpine regiment (the Alpini) possesses all the characteristics of a myth. The historical literature on the Alpini is mythopoetic because it gives life to a timeless human type, or one that is outside of time. This type then transfigures the features and aspirations of the community from which it emerges and to which it is directed. The construction of such a myth began before the Great War, during the colonial wars, and in particular, after the defeat at Adowa, which was reinterpreted as a “glorious day, but one of ill-fortune”. Thereafter followed the codification of the keywords that competed to define the warlike virtues of the mountain soldier: discipline, vigour, physical and moral health, and the spirit of sacrifice. The Great War was the key moment – as well as high-point – for the systematisation of the mythology surrounding the Alpini. The figure of the alpine soldier derived its force, and in many senses its exceptional character, above all from the geographical tie which bound him to his unit: the alpine battalion was a community defined by direct ties of blood and acquaintanceship. For the greater part of the war this bond translated into solidarity between officers and soldiers, with the former sharing the rigours, risks and glory with their men. Indeed, such was the extent of this solidarity that officers ended up identifying more with their men, confining in hostile fashion the rest of the military machine to the margins. The exceptional nature of the mountain war experience was also to have strong repercussions in the realm of memory. In many cases, in fact, the myth formed by the alpine soldiery of the experience of war differed from the public memory constructed by national rhetoric, and emphasised the problem of a divided memory of the conflict in post-war Italy.

Martin Schennach

*The 'arms-bearing Tyrolean': on the origins, changes and functioning of a historical myth*

Since the establishment of an image of the 'arms-bearing Tyrolean' in the eighteenth-century, this 'myth' has made recourse to different historical reference points, such as the provincial charter (Landlibell) of 1511, the 'Bavarian business' (Bayerische Rummel) of 1703, the Tyrolean uprising of 1809, and the First World War. Yet, despite varying explanations for this phenomenon, one characteristic of the myth, has remained unchanged: it is assumed that Tyroleans are distinguished by their capacity for arms-bearing, which is evidenced in extraordinary military feats that exceed those of other countries. Whereas the instrumentalisation of this myth by the Tyrolean estates in the eighteenth-century was predominantly used in relation to their conflict with the central government in Vienna, it served from the second half of the nineteenth-century onwards as a central component in the construction of specifically (German-)Tyrolean identity. During the interwar period, local historiography forcefully took up the same image against the background of the South Tyrol Question, and this discourse maintained its significance after 1945, albeit with slightly altered nuances. In addition, the author examines how the alleged particularity of the 'arms-bearing Tyrolean' has been approached by historiography and other publications from outside of Tyrol.

Cinzia Villani

*'There goes a crowd of slaves': forced labour and the transit camp in Bolzano/Bozen (1944–1945)*

The article examines the systematic exploitation of prisoners as forced labourers at the police transit camp in Bolzano/Bozen. The prisoners carried out different kinds of work, above all outside the camp, where they laid telephone cables, repaired railway tracks and sleepers, transported various materials, cleared rubble, set off mines, excavated bunkers, and so on. Living conditions were recalled as being very harsh. Around 500 prisoners were dispersed in satellite camps in various localities around the province and these too were always employed as slave labour in different activities. The author dedicates considerable space to the use of many internees in a ball-bearing and roller factory, the Industria Meccanica Italiana (Imi), located in the eastern part of the city of Bolzano/Bozen. This industrial plant had been transferred from Ferrara in order to protect productivity, and – as far as has been ascertained up until now – more than 450 prisoners (both men and women) were employed there in total.