

Zeitschrift: Histoire des Alpes = Storia delle Alpi = Geschichte der Alpen
Herausgeber: Association Internationale pour l'Histoire des Alpes
Band: 12 (2007)

Rubrik: English summaries

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 20.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

English Summaries

Pier Paolo Viazzo, Transitions to modernity in the alpine area. Dichotomies, paradoxes, questions

Alpine studies have long been dominated by the tenet that approximately between 1850 and 1950 a major economic and social process involving the advent of electricity, the growth of tourism and the creation of a network of roads and railways brought about a radical shift from tradition, closure and economic backwardness to modernity, openness and economic development. Recent investigations, including the ones whose results are reported in this issue of the journal, indicate that this picture rests on dichotomous contrasts which are too rigid to accommodate the complexity of the changes experienced by the Alpine area over the past two centuries. They suggest that such complexity can be properly understood only when the existence of a number of paradoxes and ambiguities is fully recognised: historical and anthropological research shows that both individuals and collective bodies could take conservative stances in some fields and favour innovation in others; that mountain communities could display at the same time endogamic closure and economic openness; that the benefits of electrification could be unevenly distributed among the various parts of the same upland region; and, indeed, that backwardness can now prove an asset for successful modernisation in the name of mountain authenticity.

Sandro Guzzi, Family kinship and economic development: an Alpine model? Western Valais between 1750 and 1850

The meaning of kinship has recently been re-valued as a historical factor. Yet, little new light has been shone on the connection between economic development and changing family structures in the 18th and 19th centuries. This is also due to

the fact that things evolved differently in different areas. In Valais, in the Rhône Valley, one may find a strengthening of family ties that may be explained as a change in the relation between population and land use. Indeed, demographic growth forced the population to develop new forms of solidarity, and to devise solutions to mitigate risks and learn to pre-empt them. Their implementation was largely the responsibility of family members.

This scenario gave rise to family cooperation, economic growth and diversification of activities. Changes, therefore, did not simply reflect increased demographic pressure. Equally important were the cultural changes that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, as for instance the repression of free love and sexuality, and the growing number of illegitimate births. In addition, through safeguarding the value of family ties, young people were encouraged to get married and to create a family of their own.

Margareth Lanzinger, Church power, anti-liberal alliances and the limits of lay insubordination. The practice of marriage dispensations in Tyrol and Vorarlberg in the 19th century

Towards the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, the German-speaking part of historical Tyrol was swept by the winds of anti-liberalism and of an ultramontane political Catholicism. This situation exacerbated the conflicts of interest between the different institutional levels (central, local, and regional governments), but also between State and Church. Marriage law turned into a virulent field of dispute with respect to vetoing marriages on the basis of family relations. It was most of all marriages between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law which, from 1831 onwards, met with harsh resistance. The only decisive argument in securing a dispensation seems to have been a threat to abjure one's Catholic faith. However, even these cases often called for mediation. Failing to obtain the dispensation, applicants tried to force the hand of the authorities by standing up against their ruling, or resorting to legal assistance, with the only result of jeopardising their chances of success. Most attempts to snatch a dispensation were recorded in the western side of the diocese, but also among the city's bourgeoisie. From the perspective of structuring the state from the bottom up, had the attempts to involve the political institutions and to resort to civil law been successful, it would have meant a considerable step forward towards modernisation. However, this was not the case.

Marco Cuaz, The “maestrine d’en bas”. Primary school teachers and cultural disputes in the Aosta Valley between the 19th and the 20th century

In the Aosta Valley, between the 19th and 20th century, tradition and modernity clashed on a terrain that had a somewhat dramatic impact on the entire community, as reflected in the fate of the former village schools. This was the case of the small mountain schools, founded by the clergy and entrusted to local teachers who had no formal qualifications whatsoever, yet were law-abiding and enjoyed the trust of the whole community.

Against the backdrop of “modern” primary education – i. e. the (“Italian” and urban) state school, carrier of new values, interrupting the mechanisms of cultural transmission of the Alpine world – one figure dominated the stage in the collective drama. We refer to the *foreign* school teachers, qualified professionals, those who landed in a mountain school after completing a formal training course, bringing with them a “city” culture; in short, the *new* teachers, often referred to as the *maestrine* (little teachers) *d’en bas* – young women, single and well-educated. They were seen as a threat to the community’s traditions and values; a presence that called in question language, dialect, religious values and the very notion of *patria* (home country), all of which had for so long characterised a way of life in mountain villages.

Aurélie Rousselot-Pailley, The irrigation canals of Briançonnais. Historical evidence of mountain society past and present

The Briançonnais region is famous for its remarkable network of irrigation canals. These canals were built by several generations of mountain dwellers, who, from the end of the Middle Ages and perhaps even earlier, gathered together within single communities to safeguard their land from flooding rivers and to irrigate fields and meadows during the dry season. From 1865 onwards, responsibility for enforcing rules and regulations was handed over to “Authorised Trade Unions” (*Associations Syndicales Autorisées*) comprising presidents and councillors. They were also responsible for overseeing the maintenance of irrigation canals by their owners. Nowadays, these Unions being no longer operational, the town councils have taken over the management and supervisory competence for the main waterways. Although the canals no longer fulfil their original function

of irrigating the cultivated plots, they still serve to water private gardens and vegetable patches.

In this anthropological survey we aim to describe how a network of irrigation canals worked in certain communes of *Pays des Écrins*; we also aim to stimulate a debate on the economic and identity implications of a possible planned comeback of these canals; and finally to analyse the future prospects of the irrigation waterways.

Martin Schaffner, Urseren, a corporate body of citizens, between permanence and progress. Interim results of an archival and research project

Since 1888, the corporate body of citizens in Urseren – whose sovereign legal functions go back to the valley's communities – has been an autonomous body ruled by public law. Its jurisdiction covers approximately 90 per cent of the territory marked out by three passes – Furka, Oberalp, and Gotthard – where it also enjoys a number of usufructs. Thus, the guild may be seen as an actor with a major influence on the history of the valley. The burghers' guild's archives, notably the sources relating to the period between the early 19th century and 1950, have been open to the public since 2003 and 2004. This made it possible for us to examine the role of the *bourgeoisie* during the process of modernisation in the 19th and 20th centuries ("Urseren-Projekt" during a History seminar at the University of Basle). Early findings have elicited that, in terms of trade, tourism and economic management, the middle classes were receptive to change, but deep down the guild maintained an unshakeable bond with tradition. In addition, a crucial factor was also the cultural heritage of the valley, to which they could resort.

Hansjürg Gredig, Electricity and "progress". The influence of progress and of urban energy demand in the early days of electrification in the Grisons

Since the 19th century, electricity has been seen as a condition of, if not a synonym for, progress. Hotel-keepers in the Grisons (but also those of the whole Alpine arc) were quick in seizing both the opportunities and the need for, electrification.

Early producers of electricity included industrial plants, such as water-mills, sawmills and breweries. And so it was that the Grisons (as well as other Alpine regions, Valtellina being one) became an exporter of electric power, although (in contrast with the case of Valais) it generated no significant industrial boom. Another major thrust in favour of early electrification was driven also by artisans and local council institutions, main power stations on the railway (Cebbia, Lüen) as well as by Brusio's council, by *Rhätische Werke* in Thusis, by *Albulawerk*, and by the city of Zurich. Ultimately, the outward marks of electrification show up in well-defined spaces and situations.

Ruggero Crivelli, Mathieu Petite, Gilles Rudaz, The fortunes of a Valais hamlet. Swinging between backwardness and modernity

The article analyses the case of a restoration process applied to deserted hamlets in the 1960s. It points out how these rural communities evolved, through phases of being valued and phases of being disdained, and how such evolution depends on the broad historical context of Valais and even of the Alps. The images that have stuck to these areas over time have contributed both to marginalising some of their villages and to re-centring others. In the end, the same spot, the same object or the same space, considered to be lagging behind or backward at a given time, may acquire a modern or innovative status at another time.

Reto Furter, Spas and thermal springs from the modern age. A typically Alpine phenomenon?

For over two centuries now, the Alps have been associated with the notions of *health* and of leisure time. According to a manual on thermalism of the mid-19th century, Alpine tourists expected to benefit in many ways from mountain spas. Today, Alpine health resorts are marketed as leisure centres, where one can recuperate, re-energise and restore one's well-being.

Checking through the guests registers in three "wellness" clinics of the 15th, 18th, and 19th centuries we find evidence that baths and mineral hot springs of the Alpine arc were little known. Thus, from the 15th century onwards, patronising Alpine spa resorts was no better than patronising spa baths elsewhere in Europe.

The Alps were nonetheless looked on as a space eminently suitable for health resorts and hot springs. The reason was their low population rate and their low degree of urbanisation. The sheer uncrowded conditions of the Alpine regions stimulated interest in them, which is the reason why today spa and wellness resorts continue to exist.

**Claudio Lorenzini, Following pre Candido's pupils.
Clergy, education, and immigration in Carnia in the second half
of the 17th century**

An excerpt from the personal accounts book of *pre Candido Polonia*, chaplain of the Sanctuary of *Madonna di Raveo* (Carnia) during the latter half of the 17th century, provides an opportunity for observing the role of the clergy in Friuli's mountain region in those years. Besides assisting pilgrims and assuring pastoral care for villagers, one of his official duties was as a school teacher. We have the testimony of a group of children of immigrants, who came from the *pedemontana* (lit. the *foot of the mountain*) zone of western Friuli. The presence of these school children may be seen in the context of the circulation of men and animals, started up by migrations: seasonal for the Carnic communities and periodical for the immigrants. The former were involved in the clothing industry, the latter in exploiting the resources enjoyed by the former: alpine pastureland and forests. To ensure sustenance and continuity, both sorts of migratory movements had to arrange for the younger generations to receive adequate education.

**Luc Oreškovič, A diocese in the Dinaric Alps. A confluence of Italian
and German backgrounds (17th and 18th centuries)**

In the 17th and the 18th centuries, the Catholic diocese of Senj-Modruš, in that sector of the Dinaric Alps belonging to Habsburg-ruled Croatia, represented a crossroads of influences between the Italian and the Germanic culture, covering over the existing Croatian characteristics. The weight of military aristocracy, the individual routes, and the status of secular and regular clerics were to be found in an area that stretched well beyond the diocese itself. The balance of powers could be felt most of all in the field of spirituality and in the expres-

sions of devotion. Yet, during the 18th century, a degree of Austro-centrism emerged alongside a process of Germanisation: the regulations enforced by Vienna dominated religious practice. Society underwent some kind of renovation, with parishioners turning into loyal subjects of the house of Austria.

Simona Boscani Leoni, New perspectives on eighteenth-century research on the mountains: the Anglo-Swiss-Alpine network

The paper analyses the network of correspondents of Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, the well-known doctor and naturalist from Zurich, whose life straddled the 17th and 18th century. In particular, the focus is on two channels of information Scheuchzer resorted to: on the one hand, several members of the Royal Society, above all the medical and fossil expert John Woodward, on the other hand, the network of intelligence sources of Alpine Switzerland. Scheuchzer was one of the most notable spokesmen for Woodward's Diluvium theory on the Continent; and the British saw him as one of the most significant informers on the Alpine world and on Swiss natural history.

Through his role of mediator, Scheuchzer contributed to the launch of a vast network of data gathering throughout Switzerland. Especially noteworthy were his contacts with the Alpine world's elite. The article illustrates how instrumental these channels were for Scheuchzer's research activity and even more so for the role played by Alpine information sources.

Marco Schnyder, Bargaining power, communication, and negotiations across the Alps. Sovereigns and subjects in the Swiss Confederation during the Ancien Régime

At the heart of the Alps, between the 13th and the 16th centuries, a very complex institutional and territorial entity was formed, known in historiography as "the helvetic body". It comprised the sovereign cantons, allied cities and towns, and the subject districts ("bailiwicks"). cantons and subject districts together made up the Swiss Confederation proper. Owing to the multi-centric character of sovereign power, and to a system of government that safeguarded the principle of local independence, "sovereign" and "subject" interrelated and ran their affairs on the basis of two instruments: negotiation and com-

munication. The article tackles the issue of interrelation between “sovereign” and “subject” by analysing the delegations despatched by the citizens of the southern bailiwicks to the Diet, the highest organ of the Confederation. The subject territories went on petitioning for direct access to sovereignty status, despite attempts by the sovereign states to rationalise procedures. In this sense, the thrusts of modernity, in the confederate context, had little or no influence on the practice of government. And this was so not because sovereign states lacked the will or the power, but rather because the subject districts typically rejected change and innovation.

Patrice Poujade, Mountains in a trade network. The Pyrenees and the mule trade in the modern age

Modern Pyrenees have witnessed, following a chronology still to be defined, the expansion of rearing and trading of mules, animals that were essential to the transport of goods across most of southern Europe. Since the 16th century, strong Spanish demand was crucial to this trend. It was then that the Pyrenees began to specialise in purchasing newborn mules from Poitou and Auvergne, to feed and raise them in the mountains, and then, once these animals had grown fit for work, to sell them on to Catalunya, Aragon, and Castille, especially at cattle fairs. The Pyrenees were at the time a crucial link in the commercial chain from Poitou and Auvergne to the Iberian Peninsula. In the 18th century, the process grew stronger when several valleys, from Béarn to Andorre and Pays de Foix, converted to this form of production. The movement highlights the strategic role of an activity in which there was a lot at stake for the valleys’ elites that exercised control over it and seized the rights over grass and hay. It also reveals the action of the French public administration to oversee such activity, for indeed local interests (to produce and sell what Spain demanded, which is lucrative) clashed with those of the State, whose main goal was the production of good horses.

Paolo Tedeschi, Property market, credit and manufacturing industries in the Alps. The case of the valleys of eastern Lombardy (18th–19th centuries)

In the property markets of the valleys of eastern Lombardy in the 18th and 19th centuries, demand and prices fluctuated. That was due not only to land rent, but also to family kinship, methods of payment and the “quality” of a mortgage on a piece of land in the local credit market. If a family business diversifies into multiple sectors, the labour component of production costs will be considerably contained: in such an economy farming estates played a particular role, hence many contracts were signed out of the need to raise capital to support manufacturing industries. On the basis of a *livello* contract, lands (mainly small-sized lots) granted access to the loan market, with the additional benefit of revenues from harvesting cereals, fodder, and timber (a cut in rent set out in the *livello*). At the heart of the credit system stood the so-called *Luoghi Pii* (charitable institutions), which were religious institutions aimed at ensuring social solidarity within the village communities: when recession hit, the *Luoghi Pii* averted major price cuts in the landed property market while furthering, thanks to a system of regular repayments, the financial management of manufacturing industries.

Emilie-Anne Pépy, “Awesome desert” or mirror-image of Eden. Mountain representations, the example of the Grande Chartreuse

The case of the mountains of la *Grande Chartreuse* fits into a reflection on the periodisation of the history of Alpine images in the modern age. From the Middle Ages a kaleidoscope of frightening images came to light, meant first and foremost as an answer to the needs of hagiography to extol the devotion of St Bruno’s disciples. Religious literature as well as travelogues of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries retrieve these roots and strengthen the representation of the Awesome Desert. And yet, at the end of the 17th century a positive vision of the Chartreuse mountains emerged, in a framework of landscape management and economic revival of the Desert. A traveller’s gaze, a designer’s gaze, frightening solitude or pleasant prairies: all of these elements combine to provide an insight into how representation reflects the context in which it was conceived and processed.

Peter Michael–Caflisch, “Wer leben kann wie ein Hund, erspart”. Towards a history of the Grison’s pastry cooks abroad

Up to the end of the 19th century, most of the best pastry cooks in Europe came from the Grisons, the old “Free State of the Three Leagues” (*Freistaat der Drei Bünde*), mainly from the reformed regions of Upper Engadin, Schams, and Bergell. From the 16th century onwards, these artisans settled in the main cities of Italy, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia. Their number grew from the 18th century to the 19th century, until the time when the First World War put a stop to their activities. The freedom to set up business and trade was guaranteed to the Grisons’s pastry cooks on the basis of diverse treaties, though they were often far from welcome as they competed with local artisans. By contrast, the government of the Grisons looked favourably on emigrants since their departure managed to reduce population numbers; likewise the expectation was that some of them would come back after making a fortune. Most of them, however, settled abroad, with a mere 20 per cent returning to live in their home canton, sometimes with no property.

Loretta Seglias, Schwabengänger in the Grisons. Child labour and seasonal migration towards Upper Schwaben

Throughout the 19th century and up until the outbreak of the First World War, every year the poverty that affected some of the Alpine valleys in the Grisons drove many families to send their children abroad to work during the summer on the farms of Upper Schwaben. These children – nicknamed *Schwabengänger* – used to complete their journey on foot, walking to reach the big cities of Baden-Württemberg and Bavarian Allgäu, where “child fairs” were held. On a farm, children used to work as farm labourers and servants, and the wages they received were known as *Doppel Häs*, in other words clothes and a little cash. Some children fell prey to violence and abuse. To explain the causes and circumstances of child migration in the Grisons, we must take into account a whole series of factors including the patterns of life at the time, but also the life experiences and the existence of these children before and during their migration, as well as after they had returned to the Grisons.

**Norman Backhaus, Claude Reichler, Matthias StremLOW,
A landscape model for the Alpine Arc. Observations of a Swiss
research programme**

How are we going, in future, to portray Alpine landscapes where men, animals and plants may properly cohabit and develop? To what extent would a responsible and sensible attitude to the process of perception and representation allow a sustainable development of the Alpine area? Over the past few years, such questions have become increasingly relevant – and by reflex the social and cultural sciences have also been relevant to research on the Alps and their political organisation. If we are to set ourselves common objectives for the development of the landscape, we have to adopt a differentiated approach to the perception and representation of the Alps. A new landscape model helps to better organise these processes. The model described in the paper was conceived in the framework of the national research programme PNR 48, under the title of “Landscapes and habitats of the Alpine Arc”, launched by the Swiss National Science Foundation, and about to be completed.

Leere Seite
Blank page
Page vide