

The history of Ovaro

The district, that for centuries has been called *Gorto*, is parallel to the municipality of Ovaro. The importance of this area, since protostoric times, must be its centrality to the valley system, and its orographic features as well. Different zones can be used for farming, as well as the presence of natural barriers in any direction that make this area a safe place.

The assurance of an ancient attendance, however, contrasts with the relative scarcity of cognitive elements. The low number of archaeological sites is easily justified by the fact that a large portion of the land is covered by dense woods, while the few open spaces are occupied by settlements. It should also be considered that in alluvial and detritus lands origin, that characterize much of the valley, the overlapping of the layers takes place quickly and the accumulation of material is often poor.

The meager agricultural activity in this area excludes the use of plough and the occasional discovery of archaeological finds (frequently in Friuli) is here limited to the few occasions when the excavation works goes one meter below the country level. However in these circumstances, were unearthed remains of considerable interest: Celtic earrings, unearthed in Clavais in 1923 during a street construction; and ancient burials. The most recent and important finds are a Graffiti Stone in (V sec. B.C.) found in Cjanaia between the roots of a felled tree; and some medieval tombs (6th century) unearthed in 1991 in *Namontet (Liariis)*, the funeral kit consisted in some typical objects (e.g. some blades, a bone comb, a pin). However the remains that have come out during the restoration of *Pieve di Gorto* dated back at the beginnings of Christianity, that attests the presence on the hill of older worship than the current building.

However, the most important finding is the *Basilica complex* with an outbuilding Baptistry in *San Martino*, placed next to the current church. On this site, internment on various levels have gradually come to light, as a result of the work restoration of the church. The finding of a wide building's perimeter, allowed the correct reading of what was written inside church' nave: a baptismal immersion font contained in a building similar to the Basilical complex of Grado.

Toponyms and particular oral traditions are signs of a remote frequentation of the valley by different peoples: the *Pajans* (some tombs were unearthed at the end of the last century in the area of *Prencis*) and *des Aganis* (a rock in the village of Agrons) both attributed to populations that have been identified with the Celts, the Longobards and with other unidentified nomadic peoples that found shelter here, evidently pressed by numerous and bellicose peoples who moved into the Gail's valley, which lies beyond the mountains.

In 1420, Friuli joined with the Venice Republic, however Carnia was marginally involved, so it kept its autonomy status of the Patriarchal era. The most significant event of the concerned centuries was the earthquake that struck Ovaro the 28th of July 1700. After that, a reconstruction work was necessary, in particular in *Pieve di Gorto*.

Economic and social development and administrative and religious organization in the Modern Age

Families who lived in the area approached to the agricultural, artisanal and commercial activity, (walking trade, especially spices and haberdashery, weaving), giving rise to seasonal migratory flows, merchants (*cramars*) towards the Empire's lands, weavers towards inner Istria. The economic remittances of these

categories, and the peaceful period guaranteed by the Republic of Venice, allowed a time of relative economic prosperity for Ovaro, as well as for the whole Carnia.

Among the Ovaro's families that distinguished themselves in the Modern era: the *De Corte* of Ovasta, specialize in trading in the interior lands of the Empire, in particular in Edeburgh; the *Rovis* of Agrons, who had achieved a considerable well-being thanks to the artisanal activity developed in Gimino, in the Imperial Istria. In addition, the *Spinotti* of Muina, the *Crosilla-Micoli* of Mione, and the *Lupieri* of Luint. The importance of commercial and artisanal activities were followed by a growing use of loans, provided by individuals or local fraternities.

The area of Ovaro hosts 13 municipalities, corresponding to the current hamlets of *Muina*, *Agrons* and *Cella*, *Mione*, *Luint*, *Luincis*, *Ovasta*, *Entrampo*, *Clavais*, *Liariis*, *Lenzone*, *Chialina* and *Cludinico*. The city hall was governed by the "*vicinia*", the assembly of families' representatives made of the head of the family: in reality the long absence of men, who seasonally migrated to engage in commercial and craft activities, allowed women to carry on this role. The "*vicinia*" made all the decisions of the municipality and elected the members of the "*banca*", the local government, consisting of a "*meriga*", or mayor, joined by two "jurors", who had executive and representative duties.

Ovaro was part of the Venice Republic until 1797, after it passed to the Habsburg Empire, as the rest of Friuli and the whole Veneto, as enshrined by the Treaty of Campoformio. In 1866, as a result of the Third War of Independence Friuli became part of the Italy kingdom.

During the First World War, in Carnia, 97 women were employed as a carnic carriers, this means that they risk their life to supply italian soldiers with munitions and food on the nearby war front. In 1917, after the defeat of *Caporetto*, for a period Carnia was again occupied by the Austro-Hungarian troops.

During the Resistance War in 1944, Carnia was a Cossacks' headquarter, they were allied to the nazi fascists until May 1945. On the 2nd of May Cossacks, having been attacked by partisans, killed 22 civilians including the parish priest of Ovaro, Fr. Pietro Cortiula.

From an administrative point of view, the small pre-existing municipalities were progressively joined in two municipalities: Ovaro (left side of *Degano* river) and Mione (right side of *Degano* river), then gathered into one. The progressive demographic increase had been followed by the increasing of a social pressure towards the privatisation of common lands, now almost completely disappeared. The Ancient Regime survives in the hamlets of Ovasta, Liariis and in Agrons, where old families' descendant are private co-owners of some woods.

During the 19th century this area passed from a mixed agricultural-commercial or agricultural-craft economy, to a mixed agricultural-worker economy characterised by emigration in particularly towards Central Europe, where the peolpe from Ovaro were mainly employed in construction industry.

U.s.a, Switzerland, France and Belgium. However, thanks to the opening of the Paper Mill in Ovaro and the Coal Mine in Cludinico, this phenomenon stopped. Anyway, the closing of the latter, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, represented a moment of crisis in the local economy. Emigration slowed down in the 1960s, so much so that it could be defined exhausted.

