

MOLISE

THE REGION OF THE TRATTURI

13



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
DEL MOLISE



Long. Est. di Roma

CARTA GENERALE

DEI
TRATTURI, TRATTURELLI, BRACCI E RIPOSI
REINTEGRATI E NON REINTEGRATI
APPARTENENTI AL DEMANIO DELLO STATO (1911)

alla scala di 1:500000

Chilometri

Index

- 6 BRIEF HISTORY OF TRATTURI
The "Rescritto"
The Aragonese Age
The Customs of the Mena
of the sheep
TRATTURO CELANO-FOGGIA
- 8 1° Itinerary
From the Sangro River to the
Trigno
- 10 2° Itinerary
From Sprondasino to Santa Croce
of Magliano

- TRATTURO CASTEL DI S.-LUCERA
- 13 1° Itinerary
From the Zittola Bridge to Duronia
- 16 2° Itinerario
From Torella del Sannio to Tufara
- TRATTURO PESCIASSEROLI CANDELA
- 18 1° Itinerary
From Rionero Sannitico to Isernia
- 23 2° Itinerary
From Isernia to Altilia di Sepino
- 25 THE TRATTURO MAGNO
L'AQUILA-FOGGIA
- 27 INFO AND USEFUL NUMBERS

LEGENDA



- 1 - L'AQUILA-FOGGIA
- 2 - CENTURELLE-MONTESECCO
- 3 - SANT'ANDREA-BIFERNO
- 4 - CELANO-FOGGIA
- 5 - CASTEL DI SANGRO-LUCERA
- 6 - PESCASSEROLI-CANDELA
- 7 - CORTILE-CENTOCELLE
- 8 - URURI-SERRACAPRIOLA
- 9 - ATELETA-BIFERNO
- 10 - SPRONDASINO-CASTEL DEL GIUDICE
- 11 - PESCOLANCIANO-SPRONDASINO
- 12 - CORTILE-MATESE

The Region of Tratturi includes the territories of the five current Italian regions Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia, Basilicata and Campania, in the period of maximum expansion it extended from northern Abruzzo to the hinterland of Taranto and the Bari Murgia, up to touch the province of Brindisi. 14 main tracks, 70 tracks. The 14 "bracci" and 9 "riposi" are still evident from a map published in 1959. Among these are the Apennine sheep tracks most used and known:

- L'Aquila-Foggia called "Tratturo Magno" or "del Re" of 243,5 kilometres
- Celano-Foggia of 207 km
- Castel di Sangro-Lucera of 127 km
- Pescasseroli-Candela of Km 211.

What remains of these green highways of the past, real arteries of civilization, is found above all in Molise.



BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRATTURI

The tratturi have been known since ancient times. The Samnites, an Italian population of the central-southern Apennines, created the first tratturi which were at the service of transhumant sheep farming and which the Roman empire later put into operation, creating a real pastoral Civilization of Transhumance. This civilization with ups and downs reached up to the late Middle Ages.

The Rescript of the Imperial Age

In Sepino, engraved on the right shoulder, outside Porta Boiano (CIL IX 2438), is a very important document dating back to the time of Marcus Aurelius (168 AD), which provides interesting information on the transit of flocks.

The document testifies to a situation of almost monopolistic possession of large quantities of livestock by the *fiscus*, the private cash of the

emperor, a fact which finds a parallel in the establishment of the *latifundium*.

The aragonese era

It was then the Aragonese, in the mid-fifteenth century, who decided to build a complex economic system around the Apennine pastoral civilization based on sheep breeding and the wool industry, and therefore to transform the ancient grassy tracks into a more modern network functional infrastructure for the purpose. Strengthened by the experience in their native land of Spain, the dynasty planned and implemented the regulated exploitation on a large scale of the pastures of Abruzzo and the Apulian Tavoliere, exploitation which was the basis of a complete economic cycle, from breeding to the marketing of the products. The ancient tracks, suitably enlarged and organized, for over three centuries made the fortune of the Southern Kingdom. So when the Spaniards decided to make sheep breeding, and the whole related complex, the main economic activity of central-southern Italy the *green giants*, as we know them today, were born, witnesses and protagonists of the golden age of the "Civilization of Transhumance".

The Customs of the Mena of the sheep 1447, as is widely known, is the year of establishment of the "Customs of the Mena of the sheep" wanted by Alfonso I of Aragon, known as the Magnanimous by his contemporaries.

The Apulian Tavoliere largely became an immense pasture available

Opposite: Thousands of herds along the tratturo in the early years of the 20th century. On p. 7: The title page of the volume "La ragon pastorale" by Stefano di Stefano (1731); below, the tratturo in Pescolanciano in a map from 1810.



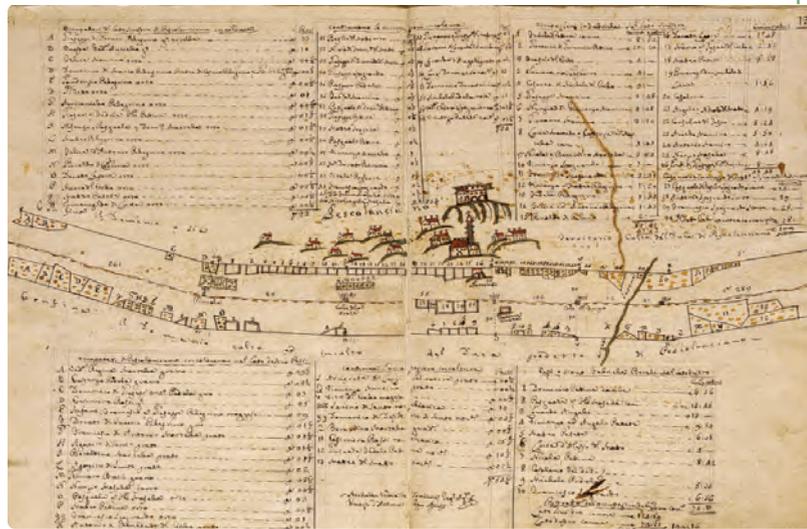
to the royal state property, divided and organized into "Leases" and "Poste" rented year after year to the "Locati", the owners of the flocks. The latter could be private, such as noble families and barons, but also ecclesiastical entities such as the large convents of Abruzzo or Molise. There were also the royal flocks, just as there had been those belonging to the emperor in ancient Rome.

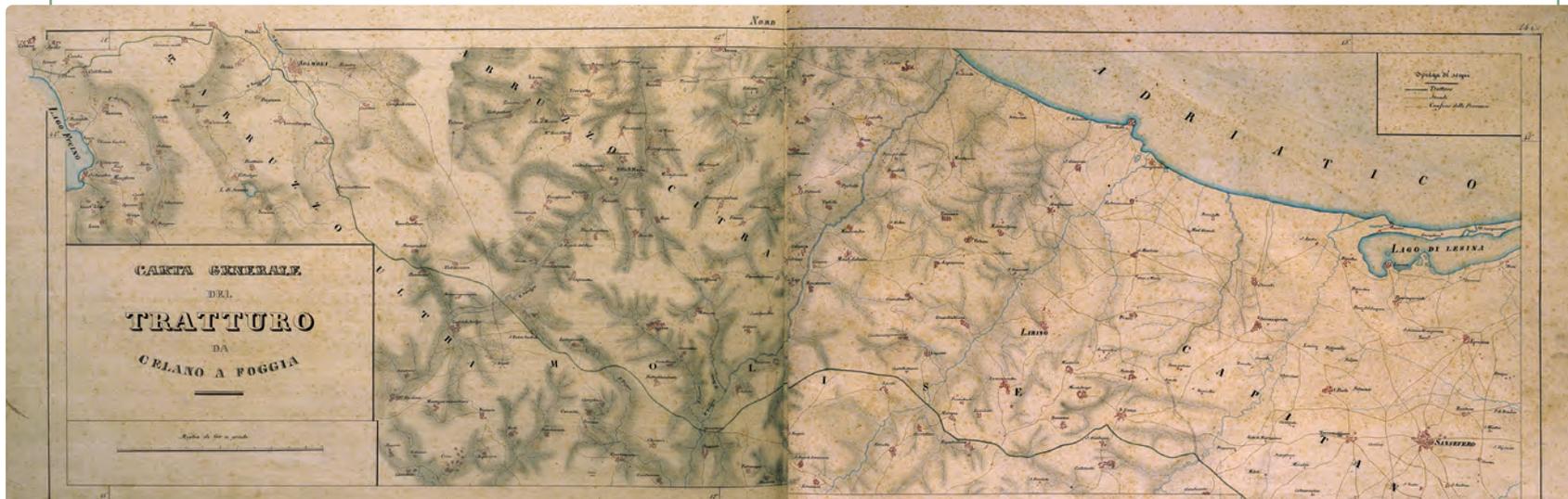
Transhumance towards Puglia became obligatory, however in the face of a series of elements and conditions which made sheep farming extremely profitable, which in the following decades (and above all in the 16th and 17th centuries) experienced considerable growth until it reached half of the 1600s numerical dimensions as never before. One of the successful elements of the system was the road network that Alfonso I himself decided to reorganize: thus the immense network formed by the large sheep tracks and their branches and connections was born. An immense road network, main and secondary, of which large traces have come down to the present day.



TRATTURO CELANO-FOGGIA

The Tratturo originates from the city of Celano, in the Fucino plain, not far from the Roman city of Alba Fucens, in Abruzzo, and after more than 200 km it arrives in Foggia, in Puglia, at the Epitaph monument.





1ST ITINERARY: FROM THE SANGRO RIVER TO THE TRIGNO

Its route is the most internal of those of the main tratturi, crossing areas that are not yet densely populated such as those between the Majella National Park and the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park, entering the territory of upper Molise in the province of Isernia and crossing the Sangro river in the countryside of San Pietro Avellana, near the Taverna del Sangro, on whose facade there was a pandetta/edict reminding wandering shepherds of the offering to pay to ford the river

in the Aragonese era.

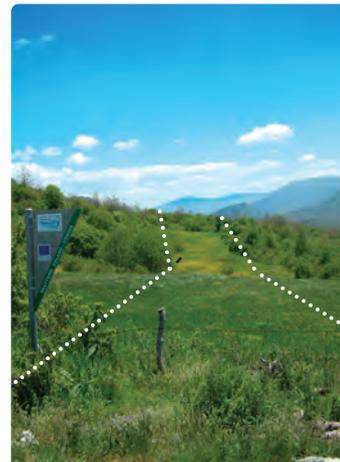
The grassy track enters the town of San Pietro Avellana which, despite the destruction suffered by the retreating Germans during the Second World War, has some monuments such as the church and hermitage of Sant'Amico, the church of Santi Apostoli Pietro e Paolo and the Museum of the Alto Molise, a Civic Museum of Arts, Crafts, Costumes and Archeology of San Pietro Avellana. An obligatory stop is the one in the shops where you can buy truffles, sausages and stretched curd cheeses such as the iconic caciocavallo.



Above: General map of the Celano-Foggia Tratturo (1836). On p. 8: Flock of sheep on Celano-Foggia beside the MaB Montedimezzo Reserve. Below: The Celano-Foggia between Vastogirardi and Carovilli (upper Molise).

You leave behind the town and the imposing mass of Monte Miglio (with Samnite fortified walls at the top), arriving near the railway station, which is part of the Isernia-Sulmona line, the so-called Trans-Siberian of Italy.

A few meters and you are already in the municipality of Vastogirardi



with the UNESCO MaB Reserve of Montedimezzo, where there are majestic native fir trees that survived the ice ages. The tratturo, visible on the left side of the forest, climbs up before arriving near the Bosco di San Nicola, from where you can observe the long grassy track that leads up to Carovilli, passing close to Monte Pizzi (another Samnite fortified wall) : we are in the less anthropized stretch. Here the vegetation has taken over completely closing the width of the sheep track. From the CAI refuge, in San Mauro, after visiting the church of Santa Lucia la Posta, close to the cattle track and inside the UNESCO MaB Reserve of Collemeluccio, in the distance you can see the peak of Monte Caraceno, on whose summit was the Samnite Ars (built inside sturdy Cyclopean walls) which controlled and defended the Sanctuary of the Italic people, today's archaeo-



logical area of Pietrabbondante with its Hellenistic theater with anatomical seats and the series of temples from the Roman era.

We are about 1000 meters above sea level and the gaze extends over the horizon: what remains of the Molise area is before the eyes. You go down a steep descent to the ruined medieval village of Sprondasino, the extreme strip of land north of the municipality of Civitanova del Sannio, until you reach the bed of the Trigno river.

Above: The small church of Santa Lucia la Posta, much frequented by transhumant shepherds. Below, the archeology area of Pietrabbondante. On p. 11: On horseback on the tratturo in Lucito and, below, the grassy track that goes up towards Morrone.



INASA

2ND ITINERARY : FROM SPRONDASINO TO SANTA CROCE DI MAGLIANO

In the Aragonese era, this ford was also controlled and used as a post for the payment of obols to the Bourbon monarchy.

The pandetta now preserved in the municipality of Bagnoli del Trigno is tangible confirmation of this. After crossing the Trigno, the grassy track begins to climb to the right of Salcito, leaving behind the seventeenth-century hunting lodge of the noble family of the Dukes of Alessandro di Pescolaniano.

From the provincial road that leads to Trivento, the tratturo appears again in all its width in a place that presents remarkable suggestions due to the presence of imposing limestone rocks, some inhabited since prehistoric times, called "Morge", which rise from the ground. We are in the center of the "Parco delle Morge". From San Biase to Lucito the tratturo is still clearly visible with the intense green of its grass, but at the crossroads for Civitacampomarano it has been disfigured by gigantic wind turbines arranged on its sides.



From the provincial road just outside Lucito, on the other side of the Bifernina valley floor, you can admire the green strip that goes up towards the town of Morrone del Sannio, a "sentinel of the sheep track" village that stands high above. Halfway up the hill before going over the hill is the abbey of Santa Maria di Casalpiano with an annexed church founded by Benedictine monks on a pre-existing rustic villa from the Roman era. You go down the hill and enter the municipality of Ripabottoni, a village located on the tratturo which preserves a village built in stone of remarkable workmanship and whose main attraction is the church of Santa





Maria Assunta with important 17th century paintings inside made by the painter Paolo Gamba. The railway station is located a short distance from Villa Centocelle, a country residence with an adjoining church built on the edge of the Tratturo. The tratturo branch that joins the Celano-Foggia sheep track to the Castel di Sangro-Lucera also starts from this point, near the Taverna del Cortile in Campobasso. Continue towards San Giuliano di Puglia. After about 3 km of steep and clayey terrain, in the locality of *Scorciacapra*, ford the Cigno stream and begin the ascent towards San Giuliano.



The town of Bonefro is located at the bottom left, while San Giuliano di Puglia is always at the bottom but on the right. Thus you enter Santa Croce di Magliano, an agricultural center in lower Molise at an altitude of 608 m. above sea level, from where you can enjoy a pleasant panorama towards the Adriatic Sea in the direction of the Gargano promontory.

Above: The Colantuono cows quench their thirst at the fountain of Villa Centocelle in Ripabottoni. Below: The tratturo meets the expanses of wheat of the Tavoliere. On p. 13: The "Castel di Sangro-Lucera" between Forlì del Sannio and Roccasicura; below, the Pantano di Montenero Valcocchiara.

TRATTURO CASTEL DI SANGRO-LUCERA

1ST ITINERARY FROM THE ZITTOLA BRIDGE TO DURONIA

This Tratturo is also one of the transhumance routes, with a length of about 130 km. It departs from Pescasseroli-Candela at Ponte Zittola, near Castel di Sangro in Abruzzo, and arrives at Lucera in Puglia.

La Zittola is a tributary of the Sangro River. Its copious springs can be seen close to the Pantano called della Zittola in the municipality of Montenero Val Cocchiara (IS) and is part of a system of wetlands present in upper Molise. It is formed by rainfall and underground springs that flood 440 hectares of marshland from October to May, representing a vital water reserve for animal and plant species, including the Sweet Willow, dating back to the Ice Age.

Leaving Abruzzo, the tratturo goes up towards the hamlet of Montalto di Rionero Sannitico. The rural village was built on the route of the sheep track, the grassy track then

enters a mountainous area with little human settlement and crosses the Bosco Falascoso in the municipality of Forlì del Sannio, which in addition to a Samnite fortification, also preserves the remains and vestiges of what Roman times it must have been a city with an annexed forum (Forum Julii). From the fortification called Castel Canonico you can observe the long route which, skirting





the town of Roccasicura, climbs up to the top of Monte Pian di Lago, then turns onto the other side and descends towards the ancient tavern near the hamlet of Cerro Savino of Carovilli.

You walk under supervision from Monte Ferrante with its fortified walls and you come close to Pescosciano, whose castle can be seen in the distance. Before the castle, Santa Maria de' Vignali is worth a visit, a medieval village with a tower located on the top of the hill, originally with fortifications and structures from the Samnite era.

The imposing castle of the Dukes of Alessandro controls a large part of the route that leads to Lake Chiauci (artificial basin), to then enter the municipality of Civitanova del Sannio from above.

The gaze is captivated by the spectacular panorama from which we



Above: General map of the Tratturo di Motta (Castel di Sangro-Lucera), 1844 and stone term delimiting the trattural track. Above, the cattle track emerges behind the village of Pescosciano. On p. 15: above, the cattle track enters Civitanova del Sannio and below it goes up towards Duronia.



observe the town at our feet, the Benedictine monastery "De Jumento Albo" in the center and, clearly visible, the cattle track that from the Trigno river goes up towards Civita Vecchia, today's Duronia. Other for-

tified walls are present along this segment, including Monte Sant'Onofrio di Chiauci and the Civitelle di Duronia: this has also led to it being identified as the "Tratturo delle cinte".

2ND ITINERARY FROM TORELLA DEL SANNIO TO TUFARA

After crossing the town of Duronia, head straight towards Molise (among the smallest villages in the region) and reach Torella del Sannio, whose view is embellished by the circular towers of the castle where the versatile artist Elena Ciarrara (1894- 1981). We then arrive at the end of this plateau on whose rocky ridge Castropignano extends with the mighty castle of Evoli do-



minating the Biferno Valley. We descend rapidly to the Biferno river which we cross under the severe gaze of the enormous "prehistoric" rock called Rocca di Oratino and we begin the strenuous climb that will lead us to Santo Stefano, a hamlet of Campobasso. The capital city is on the right. Thus we arrive at the Taverna del Cortile, an impor-

Below: The castle of Evoli in Castropignano and the Rocca di Oratino. On p. 17, from top to bottom: Herd of cows crosses the Biferno river in the countryside of Castropignano, the medieval bridge of Toro and the castle of Gambatesa.

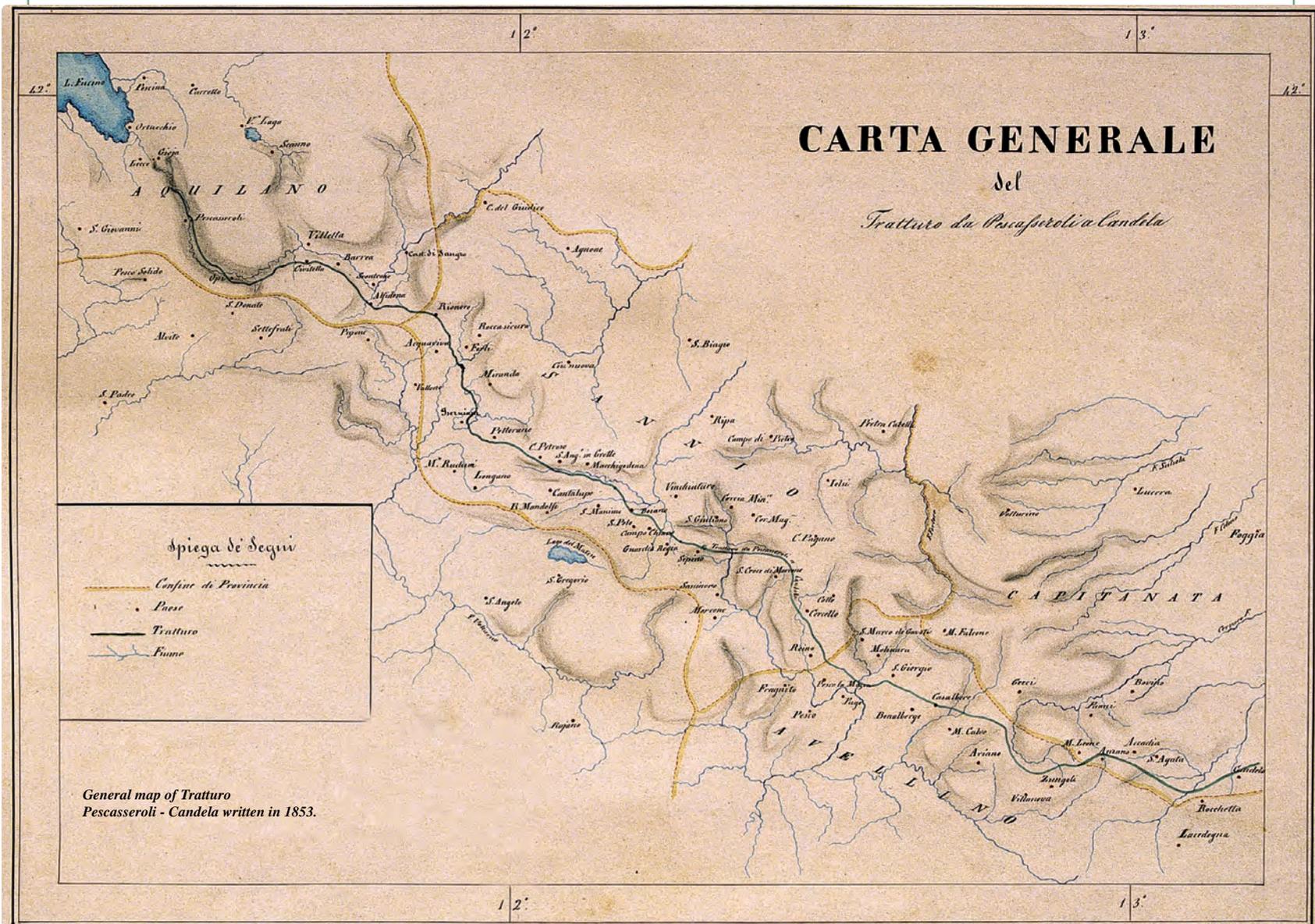


tant link for the flocks that from the Matese reached Puglia. The landscape has changed, the first signs of the Tavoliere can be seen on the horizon. Campodipietra is right on the tratturo with the grassy track that stretches before our eyes, we are still around 700 meters above

sea level, and we begin to descend towards the Tappino river, where we meet in the countryside of Toro a suggestive medieval bridge at humback still used by the locals.

With great strides you continue to descend and leaving the village of Pietracatella at the top right, you move towards Gambatesa which welcomes you with the superb castle of Capua, a medieval manor transformed into an elegant noble residence in the Renaissance. Entering the rooms, one is fascinated by the sixteenth-century frescoes by Donato Decumbertino. The last Molise village crossed by the tratturo is Tufara, whose profile with castle at the top is visible on the right.





TRATTURO PESCASSEROLI-CANDELA

This tratturo (211 km) originates from Pescasseroli, in Abruzzo, and arrives in Lucera, in Puglia; it has an average width of 60 meters; it was still in use as director of trans-

shumanance until the early 1950s. In some stretches its route paralleled that of the Via Herculea, a Roman consular road from the imperial era which connected Aufidena (not far from Pescasseroli) with Lucania, passing not far from Candela.

1ST ITINERARY: FROM RIONERO SANNITICO TO ISERNIA

Leaving behind the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, the tratturo crosses the Ponte della Zittola and begins to climb Valle Salice, following the route of the modern

S.S. 17. It then enters the built-up area of Rionero Sannito, in what was originally supposed to be a temporary village and which later became an area for building expansion. Even the Passo di Rionero was subject to the payment of oboli, as stated on the pandetta once at the



entrance to the town and today in the entrance hall of the town hall. We are over a thousand meters above sea level. and as soon as you leave the town, the gray outline of Monte Miletto appears, the highest peak of the Matese, the sacred mountain of the Samnites.

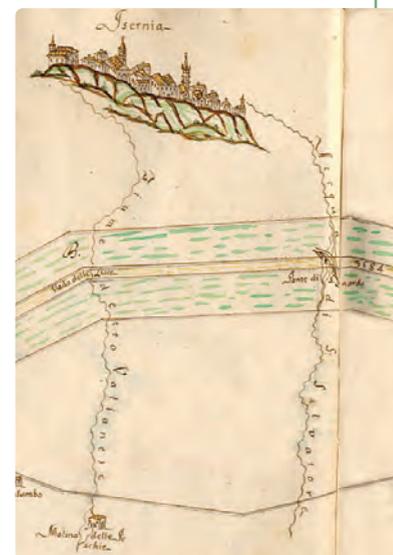
From this point and up to the city of Isernia, the tratturo follows the S.S. 17 in the section called Macerone, a well-known climb as during the stages of the pre-war Giro d'Italia the

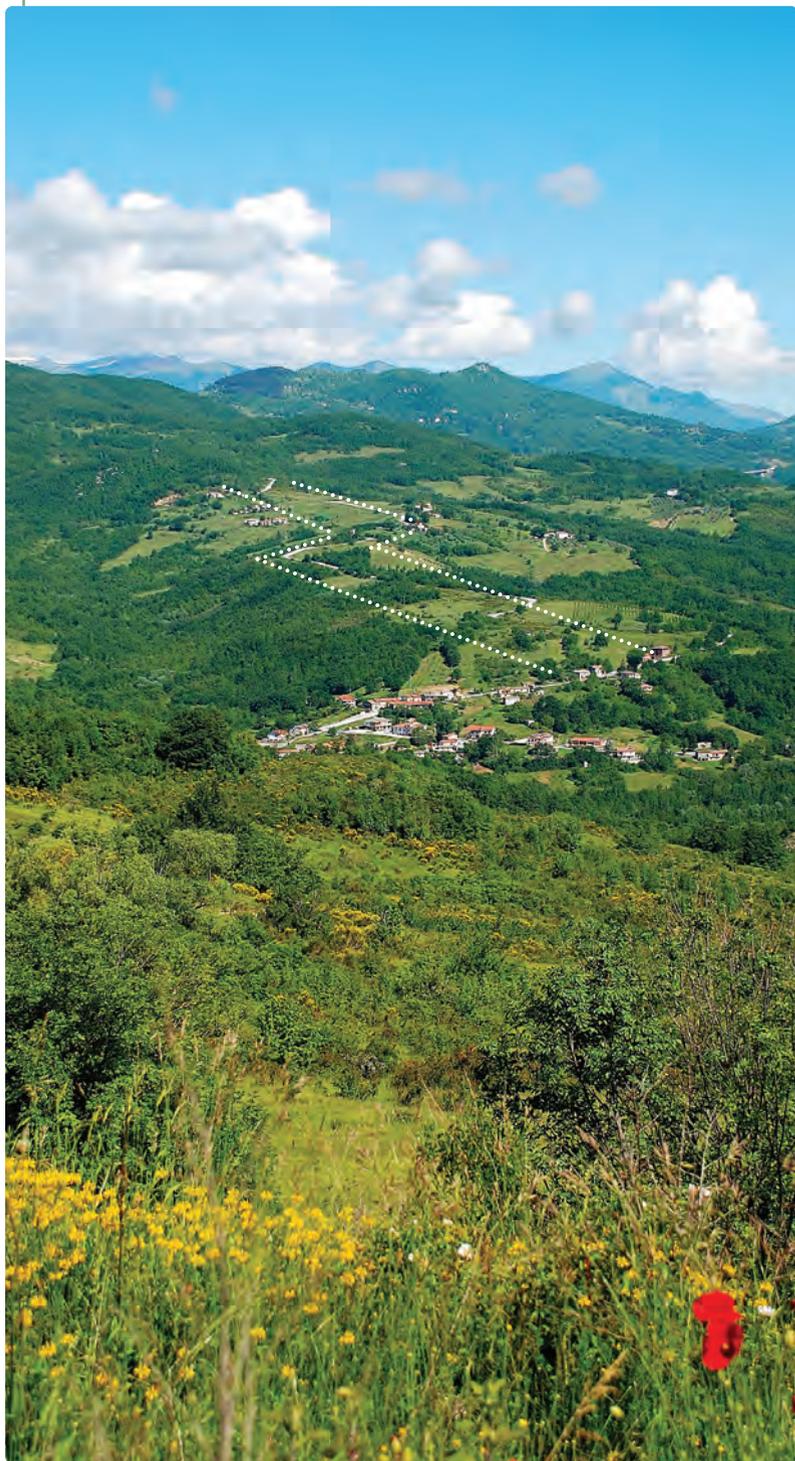
Above: Panoramic view of the valley crossed by the Pescasserali-Candela cattle track from the "terrace" of Rionero Sannitico. Opposite: "Pandetta" by Ronero Sannitico and, on p. 21, drawing from 1816 depicting the city of Isernia and the cattle track.



steep climb broke the legs of the cyclists. In Isernia the sheep track has completely disappeared; originally it crossed the Sordo river at the "Ponte San Leonardo", near the current Carabinieri barracks, took today's Via Latina and continuing along Corso Garibaldi, it reached the Villa Comunale, where until the beginning of the 20th century. there was a rest, a huge square used to settle the flocks for the night.

From the Villa you veered sharply to the left and passing under the current railway bridge, you forded the Carpino river, and then continued towards La Pineta, the important prehistoric site discovered in the late 1970s.





2ND ITINERARY: FROM ISERNIA TO ALTILIA DI SEPINO

Go up the countryside of Pettoranello del Molise skirting the town and as soon as you go down the hill, you find the ancient cattle track which is located halfway up the slope and begins to descend towards what was once a lake and today is a fertile plain, mostly cultivated with

On p. 22: The Pescasseroli-Candela tratturo in the area of Forlì del Sannio and, below, the hamlet of Vandra. On this page, from top: The tratturo in Boiano, the Sanctuary of Castelpetroso and the Longobard necropolis in Campochiaro.



wheat. The tratturo affects the lateral area and, once the plain is finished, it climbs again in the wooded part until it reaches the height of the Sanctuary of Castelpetroso.

The tratturo becomes again the S.S. 17 which descends steeply to the crossroads of Cantalupo del Sannio. From here to the straight stretch of the Piana di Boiano it's a moment. The tratturo runs alongside the important arterial road on the right, crossing the territory of San Mas-



simo and reaching as far as Boiano, an ancient Samnite city, a Roman municipium and in the Lombard era, with Benevento as its capital, at the head of the County of Molise. The tratturo is easily traveled; the fertile plain has in some stretches been reduced to land for an industrial area, as in the case of Campochiaro, but the suggestion is still alive when one arrives in Località Vicenne to visit the necropolis of the Lombard warriors of the 7th century.

At Guardiaregia, known for the WWF Oasis, leave the S.S. 17 and continuing to travel rapidly, we arrive at the Roman city of Sepino/Altilia. Porta Boiano is located at the beginning of the Decumanus, which ends on the other side with Porta Benevento. The Decumanus of the city of Sepino (from saepio = enclosure) is an integral part of the Pescasseroli-Candela tratturo.

Crossing this artery within the city is like taking a leap back 2000 years: in sequence, it is possible to admire the monumental Porta Boiano, the Baths, the housing district, the Macellum, the Basilica, the Forum and deviating on the cardo, the magnificent Theater on top of



MIC MOLISE

which rural houses were built in the eighteenth century. You arrive at Porta Benevento, where you can admire the Mausoleum of the Neratii family. A few kilometers and the tratturo is in Campania, to then arrive in Puglia.



SENTIERI CAI ITALIA

TRATTURO MAGNO L'AQUILA-FOGGIA

The royal tratturo L'Aquila-Foggia, also called Tratturo del Re or Tratturo Magno, with its 244 km is the longest and most important of the Italian sheep tracks.

The Tratturo Magno originates from the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila; the traditional departure of the transhumance from the churchyard of the basilica, historically ascertained since the end of the thirteenth century, was then codified by the Alfonsine Regulations

On p. 24: Graphic reconstruction of the tratturo inside Sepino; below, flock at Porta Boiano. Below, the L'Aquila-Foggia at Guglionesi and at San Martino in Pensilis.

of the fifteenth century. On its way it crosses internal Abruzzo and passing through the city of Chieti, it reaches the Adriatic coast near Vasto.

The coastal areas of Montenero di Bisaccia, Petacciato, Termoli, Campomarino and the territories of San Giacomo degli Schiavoni, Guglionesi, Portocannone and San Martino in Pensilis are crossed by the Tratturo Magno.

Today the track has almost completely disappeared or is included in the S.S. 16 Adriatica, however remained very evident in the stretch that from Campomarino arrives at San Martino in Pensilis, as it coincides with the route of the "Carrese di San Leo", which takes place in the lower Molise town on 30 April each year.



IL TAG.IT





Modern transhumance by the Colantuono family of Acquevive di Frosolone

Info and Useful Numbers

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Testi e Immagini Tobia PAOLONE (tranne dove diversamente indicato)

Repertorio fotografico da Archivio Volturnia Edizioni già utilizzato nei volumi:

I giganti verdi del Molise, Volturnia Edizioni, 2004

Molise Guida turistica, Volturnia Edizioni 2020

Molise Magico, Mitico Meraviglioso, Volturnia Edizioni 2017

Impaginazione e grafica Tobia Paolone

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Progetto **Scoprire il Molise**. Edizione promossa dalla **Camera di Commercio del Molise**

Presidente Paolo Spina - Referente Francesca Cuna

SOPRINTENDENZA
ARCHEOLOGIA
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PER IL MOLISE



SEGRETARIATO
REGIONALE
PER IL MOLISE

TRATTURI OF MOLISE



INTERACTIVE MAP

Project DISCOVERING MOLISE

- 1 The Museum of Mysteries and the Samnite Museum of Campobasso
- 2 MAB Unesco reserve "Alto Molise"
- 3 The Swabian Castle and the old village of Termoli
- 4 The archaeological Area of Altilia/Sepino
- 5 The monumental complex of San Vincenzo al Volturno
- 6 Agnone, the Museum and the Pontifical Foundry of Marinelli Bells
- 7 The National Museum of Palaeolithic of Isernia
- 8 The Churches, the Castle and the historical centre of Campobasso
- 9 The Churches, the Museums and the Castle of Venafro
- 10 The Roman vestiges and the medieval village of Larino
- 11 The Castles and medieval fortress of Molise
- 12 Tourism water in Molise
- 13 Molise, the region of the tratturi

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