

CHAPTER TWELVE

Joseph-Samuel Farinet and the 'Modern' State: Banditry, Patronage and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Valais

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Farinet and his Friends

At the beginning of 1880, quite a peculiar event occurred in the surroundings of Saillon, in the Lower Valais (Switzerland). One morning, soon after dawn, a patrol of the gendarmerie furtively approached a farm not far from the inhabited village. All of sudden, two men left the house. One of them was armed and ran away.

He was Joseph-Samuel Farinet, the notorious falsifier, who had been sought by the Italian and Valais police for many years. The same Farinet whose image had been immortalised in Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz' novel *Farinet ou de la fausse monnaie* (1931) and, afterwards, by a successful movie (1938). A character whose idealised image is moreover kept alive by an international association named the 'Farinet friends'; these friends have stylised the life and the vicissitudes of the famous falsifier, making him a symbol of the quest for and defence of freedom.¹

We may now deal again with the above episode. According to the investigation, at that time, the peculiar event occurred: instead of pursuing the wanted falsifier, the policemen penetrated the house of his alleged accomplice – Jean-Joseph Bessard – to search it. Bessard resisted, there was a brawl, following which Bessard was roughly beaten up.²

Most likely, the gendarmes did not appreciate that Bessard shouted insults at them and that he had insulted the corporal, Julien Caillet-Bois. At any rate, during the fight,

Farinet calmly remained next to the house, 'beyond the stream'. In fact, Bessard, after having been beaten, more or less limping, reached Farinet and went away with him – without being chased by the gendarmes. One of them simply fired a gun, 'to frighten Bessard'.

It is a quite odd episode: why did the gendarmes decide not to pursue Farinet, who had been sought for many years by the police forces of several countries? Why were they so ruthless to Bessard, while Farinet observed the scene from beyond the stream? The witnesses seem to confirm the interpretation sketched by Ramuz in his novel: the authorities did not want to arrest Farinet.

Farinet had actually circulated almost undisturbed between Martigny, the Entremont and the Valley of Aosta, mainly wandering about the Bagnes Valley, in Martigny-Bourg and in the nearby boroughs of Fully, Saillon, Saxon – where he had numerous collaborators. During his stays in Valais, Farinet was evidently supported by the local inhabitants, together with various accomplices inside the state, and maybe also among the judicial authorities, whose investigations appear quite tepid. As time went by, the attitude of the local persons in charge became, in fact, suspicious even to the cantonal government. On the 15 June 1878, the State counsellor, E.H. Bioley, chief of the Justice and Police Department, wrote quite a strong letter to Fidèle Joris, the investigating judge of the district, urging him to take more resolute action against Farinet and his accomplices. According to Bioley, there were 'too many citizens favouring or at least doing nothing to thwart such a criminal industry'.³

The behaviour of the state representatives appears ambiguous. After Farinet's death, which occurred when the falsifier was closely pursued by the gendarmes, some municipal counsellors of Saillon accused the mayor and the notary public of the village

of having acted against the inhabitants' feelings, since they had cooperated with the gendarmes. Among these were Joseph and Alexandre Roduit, very likely linked through familiar ties to some other Roduit who had been among the closest Farinet collaborators in Saillon. The 'rumour' that Farinet had been killed by the gendarmes spread immediately afterwards: the authorities, considering this a threat to the public order, immediately repressed the story. In the Bagnes Valley Maurice-Damien Pellouchoud, a counsellor, was accused of having collaborated with the falsifiers' company: Pellouchoud was then discharged, although admitting he had knowledge of the illicit activities to which the Cortey family was related, without, certainly, filing any complaint.

Rivalries among the different patronages certainly played a role: Pellouchoud, who 'looked after the business' of Ignace Cortey and his wife Catherine, accomplices of Farinet, was the secretary of Narcisse Troillet, conservative leader and future deputy in the Parliament of Valais. He ascribed the complaint against his charge to the unfriendliness towards Camille Besse, judge of the Entremont tribunal and political rival of Troillet.

They were certainly insignificant personalities in the state system. However, even more relevant representatives of the institutions had ambiguous attitudes. Maurice-Fabien Carron, member of the District Tribunal from 1873 to 1877 (hence, of the competent judicial authority) and future deputy in the Parliament, is a good example: Carron admitted that he had knowledge of the activities of the falsifiers in his valley and that he had tried to dissuade several persons from taking part in such activities. He set even his brother to the villages in the valleys in order to gather some information: but even Carron did not file any complaint against the falsifiers.⁴

It is important to consider the political context of this matter. It should not be forgotten that those years were years of crisis in the Valais: in 1871 the conservative government led by Alexis Allet had been swept away by the bankruptcy of the state-owned 'Banque Cantonale'. It was therefore a situation of the clear weakness of the legal authorities who, owing to the connivances and the irregularities having accompanied the Bank's bankruptcy, had lost much of their reliability. Farinet, with his false coins, then appeared to fill an economic and symbolic gap in a situation of serious political and economic hardship.

According to the definition given by Eric Hobsbawm, this would be a phenomenon of social banditry: an outlaw covered by the population, who express somehow – in an idealised way – its feelings. In the Alpine cantons, these phenomena have evident parallels: for instance, the case of Luigi Pagani, called the 'Mattirolo' in the Mendrisiotto (Ticino), who was also curiously tolerated by the state bodies.⁵

It would be possible to deal with this fact as a symptom of state degeneration – similar to brigandage, mafia phenomena, or patronage in Southern Italy. But this would lead us back to a rigid and ideal model of 'modern' state, the variants of which represent imperfect forms.

I believe it more useful to consider our question as a symptom of the specific logic of state functioning. The studies carried out in recent years, especially those done on the early modern era, have aimed to challenge a too rigid vision of the 'state', for instance enhancing the numerous contributions of the various resistances coming from below, or stressing the diversified relationships between institutions and society, and the different use made by individuals, groups or specific social networks of such institutions.⁶ This approach is not only useful for the years preceding 1789, but can be

also useful in focusing on the various functioning models of contemporary European institutions, in relation to specific cultural and social logics.

Also in the nineteenth century, we can observe a construction (and reconstruction) process of the state ‘from below’: not only through participatory mechanisms of more or less democratic regimes, but also through the imposition of specific cultural and social logics, and of specific uses of the institutions, conditioning the real practices of the authorities.

From this perspective it is possible to speak of a specific state model – which I shall name the ‘alpine microstate’ – provided that this is not opposed to a rigid definition of the modern state, impersonal and rational, but is rather considered as one of a variety of local institutional models.

Farinet: a semiotic Interpretation

Farinet was successful in the Valais, since – like Hobsbawm’s social bandits – he embodied shared values, even if ambiguous values and, therefore, had the makings of representing – by way of projection – the political ideals and attitudes of the population.

Above all, he is an imposing figure himself for the strong personal qualities that he celebrated and underlined. Without a fixed domicile, constantly chased by the gendarmes, Farinet hung out in the mountains and valleys with a Spencer rifle on his shoulders and a revolver wedged in his belt – arms that, as far as it is known – he mainly used to impress and threaten.⁷

In addition, he was a good-looking man, tall and blond, of sturdy build. Women obviously liked him, and this was a decisive *atout*: women often brought him food and beverages, hid him and probably made him their lover. Farinet boasted with delicacy to his half-brother, still in the Aosta Valley that: ‘as to girls, I am more appreciated in

Switzerland than in Bosses'. His repentant accomplices affirmed, not without a tip of envy, that the falsifier was 'a women chaser'. At any rate, the only certain relationship in Valais was the one he had with the wife of one of his accomplices, Marie-Julienne Cretton, who left her family in the summer of 1878 to follow Farinet to the Aosta Valley.

It is understandable why both women and men liked the falsifier: Farinet played the violin, loved dancing and entertainment, and went to parties, taprooms and pints. He did not hesitate to buy drinks for friends and acquaintances – a fact which was not despised in Valais, where wine is often an indispensable factor in male sociability. After all, he had a charismatic nature, but he was also a munificent hero who, like the mythical Robin Hood, implemented a form of social redistribution.

In a report to the authorities, the police corporal Julien Caillet-Bois denounced the sympathies that the population reserved for the falsifier and its deep hostility towards representatives of the law:

I'm honoured to report to you the following in order to give you an idea of the population of the different municipalities in the district of Martigny, a population protecting the famous coin falsifier Farinet, and list the municipalities where the gendarmes have been fooled by those supporting him, to provide him assistance, such as a place to stay, and food and beverage. There are some people who help him escape from the police by shouting: 'Run away, the gendarmes are there'; everybody seems to support him, since they say: Ho! He does nothing wrong; he brings money to the country; there is not yet that much money. You, the gendarmes, you did not chase Allet and Co. that much at the time; now, a good man who brings money to our country you run after him, a man who pays well, is charitable, does good to everyone. When he gives money to poor people and when he asks for something, he always pays double; he does no harm to anybody. 'This is the idea of the countryside population'⁸

All the stereotype components of social banditry are summarized in this brief piece: hostility towards the gendarmes, opposition to the state currency monopoly,

particularly sharp after the disaster of the Banque Cantonale, accusations made against the economic politics of the state, the ideas of social justice and ‘charity’ credited to Farinet. In the background we find a theme well known in the societies of the ‘Ancien Régime’: solidarity with smugglers and swindlers, infringing the unfair state laws.⁹

From this perspective, the falsifier of the Aosta Valley appears to embody almost perfectly the identity of characters of the ‘Vieu Pays’, of the traditional, agro-pastoral Valais, fond of its autonomies and profoundly distrustful towards the state. In fact, the legitimacy of the institutions – considered as a key element in the creation of the ‘modern’ state – remains unstable and challenged by other forms of social faithfulness. As has been underlined several times, resistance and the touristic exploitation of the Farinet’s myth are strictly linked to this ideological appropriation.¹⁰

Another aspect also contributes to making Farinet a personification of the ‘Vieu Pays’: for years the young man from the Aosta Valley opted out of institutions, exploiting a series of personal and local solidarity and family ties, which seemed to constitute an alternative pattern to the institutional state.

First one needs to take into consideration the significant role of family solidarity. In the 1873 enquiry into the falsifier’s activity in Fully, the group of Farinet’s closest accomplices seemed to be structured around two clearly defined family groups: the Vérolet-Léger families and the Bender-Roduit groups. In the other investigations, the family ties remained more hidden, yet they kept on establishing essential contacts between persons and places involved in Farinet’s activity.

Native families of the Bagnes Valley, a side valley of Entremont where Farinet started his activity in Valais, constitute the main thread linking the various vicissitudes of the outlaw. The above-mentioned Jean-Joseph Bessard and his wife, who hid the

falsifier in Saillon, were natives of this valley. Another key protagonist was Louis Luisier, a merchant selling stone stoves and a native of the same valley, who turns out to be an important element of connection: many of Farinet's accomplices were relatives or acquaintances of Luisier or persons somehow connected to him.

Luisier, together with the above-mentioned François Frachebourg, a tanner in Martigny-Bourg, was among the first persons to exploit the falsifier's capacities, counting on some complicity in Bagnes. Also after his conviction, his traces emerge in different investigations; according to the witnesses' declarations, the Fully group of accomplices had contact with Luisier. Maurice-Eugène Maret and his wife, Marie-Julienne Cretton, at the core of the third investigation of the falsifier in Valais, had family ties with Luisier and Jean-Pierre Cretton, his brother-in-law and accomplice. The same Jean-Joseph Bessard mentioned at the beginning of this essay was a third cousin of Luisier's brother-in-law, Justinien Bessard.¹¹ It has to be noted that the family relationships connecting the various protagonists were often quite remote and there is probably a reason for this. The close relatives are the first to be suspected of complicity. On the other hand, the need for secrecy, the unlawful activity, and the frequent movements of the falsifier and of his equipment require reliable collaboration, undetectable by outside observers. The importance and the social logic of these personal and informal solidarities appear quite evident. Such relationships, of course, are not exclusive to Farinet. They represent rather a form of social organization which, in certain aspects, offers an alternative to the power of the state institutions.

Many documents tell us how even during the second half of the nineteenth century, many persons transferred usufructs and rights of *juissance* similar to the full

title of ownership, without entering into formal deeds. Many transactions then took place outside the institutions and written legislative provisions.

I believe it necessary to consider these informal transactions as the tissue of complex social alliances: the various parties avoided formalising a transfer of ownership or a right of usufruct, as this allowed maintaining a link, a mutual obligation that might be useful as basis of a social alliance, to maintain a solidarity relationship, that could provide support, protection, or a favour, in case of need.

A similar phenomenon emerges when studying the credit networks. Countless numbers of persons mutually borrowed money, renewed loans for years, even for insignificant amounts and even if they were concurrently creditors of other persons or hold significant capital.¹² In this case, too, the social logic of the relationship should be considered. The fact of avoiding reimbursement of the sum maintained a link; it left open a relationship that could be solicited in case of need.

Therefore, we face complex personal networks proposing once again a particular kind of loyalty, placed outside institutions and formalised relationships. These personal solidarities remained for the whole of the nineteenth century fundamental mechanisms of social security and safety, support in case of crisis, in lieu of a state perceived as distant and hostile.

Distrust of the State

During Farinet's time, state authority was still the object of a vigorous political and social conflict. In the local tradition, any attempt to reinforce and centralise the state met with obstinate and often violent resistance. The last open conflict was concurrent with the adhesion of Valais to the Catholic and conservative league of the Sonderbund and with participation in the civil war of 1847 against the liberal cantons. This episode,

however, represented nothing but the development of a more ancient history.¹³ In 1839, a temporary liberal majority, mainly established in the low parts of the central and western Valais, had imposed a new liberal constitution on the canton –not without encountering armed resistance in the districts of the High Valais. In 1844, however, after an armed conflict, the conservative party regained power; this conflict had entailed several deaths and opened deep political wounds. In the same year, a violent fight also took place in the Bagnes Valley, where the liberals at first prevailed but were then forced to capitulate on the arrival of the winning troops of the High Valais. These troops helped the conservatives to return to power and the subsequent reprisals against the liberals certainly did not help to calm feelings.¹⁴

At least until the middle of the nineteenth century, the use of violence remained an open option: any attempt to centralise the state, to reform it or to reinforce its competence met with lively resistance, traditionally anchored in the High Valais, but also in the valleys of the western Valais. And resentment between liberal-radicals and conservatives remained burningly topical for a long time: in the Bagnes Valley, just before Farinet's era, a conservative was murdered by a radical in a brawl: several persons were involved in the subsequent process – in particular the Bessard brothers – who reappear in the investigations against Farinet. It is possible to go further back, recalling a number of more or less relevant conflicts rooted in opposition to the centralization of power until the tormented Napoleonic era. It could therefore be affirmed that the reasons for resistance against centralization in the nineteenth century were not new, but revived themes and motivations going back to the armed fight against the Helvetic Republic (1798–1803).¹⁵

At the end of the eighteenth century the dominant issues were the maintenance of the Catholic religion and the defence of federalism and of municipal and local autonomies. From this perspective, all relevant expressions of the state aroused strong opposition: from taxes to tributes, to military service, to functionaries, as well as to government intervention in different fields of social life, such as education.

It is obviously necessary to be cautious: in Valais, this propensity towards autonomy and segmentation was expressed in differentiated and complex forms, mainly owing to the strong opposition between High and Low Valais, between ancient lords and subjects.¹⁶ In some francophone regions, the concern for real emancipation from the formerly dominant eastern districts of Valais and a certain economic development fostered the success of an influential liberal and radical current.

However, the legitimacy of the central government and the state's monopoly on violence remained disputed. Until the second half of the century, politics continued to be conducted partly by rifle shots and open rebellion remained a realistic option.¹⁷

After the liberal victory in the Sonderbund war (1847), however, the situation changed: Valais was integrated more fully into the federal Swiss state of 1848, imposing some fundamental frameconditions. At first glance, this helped to stabilise the cantonal state, limit the expression of open resistance and reinforce the position of the authorities. However, the new situation did not extinguish underground resistance. In other words, the attitude of the majority of the population, the distrust of institutions, and creeping resistance continued to affect the establishment and the actions of the local state.

In order to explain this phenomenon one can resort to political categories. The formally democratic constitution allowed the population to have a direct influence on

institutions. In addition, the traditionally strong role of the Catholic church gave the conservatives a solid ally, hampering real innovation for decades, for instance in relation to education or the civil code. But I consider it necessary to move forward, in order to stress two fundamental sociopolitical aspects: on the one hand, the obstinate, partially violent resistance to the expansion of state authority entailed the persistence of a financially and politically weak state, with limited margins for action. On the other hand, institutional weakness, together with the force of the informal networks, compelled the institutions' representatives to make great use of patronage, of personal and familiar channels for the exercise of power. These structural characteristics not only influenced Farinet's adventure, but also the evolution of the state during the second half of the nineteenth century.

From its beginning, by contrast with other Swiss cantons, the canton of Valais was founded on a precarious financial basis, since direct taxation was politically impossible because of the threat of armed rebellion in the valleys. During the second half of the century, the contradictions inherent in this system became more and more open. The reform programmes issued by both the liberal and the conservative governments were inapplicable on such a financial basis. The radical regime set up following the defeat in the Sonderbund war tried to resolve this problem, establishing a direct tax (1850): the hostile reaction of the municipalities and widespread passive resistance, however, practically obliged the authorities to step back. According to witnesses, after the introduction of the new tax, the situation was close to open revolt and many communities, mainly in the High Valais, threatened to take up the arms against the government. Many communities refused to apply the rolls and to collect the levies. In this way, instead of 100,000 francs of provided revenues, only 30,000 francs

was collected.¹⁸ Due to local resistance, the direct tax proved to be insufficient. In 1863, under the pressure of growing debt, a new tax law increased the public revenues; however, in 1865 the situation had already rapidly deteriorated. During that year, the government proposed an increase in the tax rate of one per mil, but this measure was refused. Subsequently, the government was forced to have large recourse to public debt, acrobatic manoeuvres and even financial irregularities.¹⁹

The public deficit was a constant feature of the second half of the nineteenth century, and it also conditioned the ambitious programmes of the conservative regime of Alexis Allet (from 1857 to 1871) and his infrastructural projects of modernization: the embankment of the river Rhône, railroads and road construction and reform of the troops.

The disaster of the Banque Cantonale in 1871 can also be seen as the result of an awkward attempt to fill the gap between the regime's modernising ambitions and the real financial capacities of Valais, an imbalance that Allet tried to rectify through financial improvisations, temporarily funded by the public credit institution. However, even this system could not eliminate the structural gap between revenues and expenditures: the irregularities became public, the Banque Cantonale went bankrupt, and the conservative regime was swept away by the scandal.

The issue of the tax charge is therefore of fundamental significance, since financial weakness heavily conditioned all cantonal politics. In this perspective, anti-tax resistance was quite efficient, since the Valais tax charge stagnated at a very low level until the end of the century: in 1894 the public expenditures per inhabitant were among the lowest in the Swiss cantons.²⁰ From this perspective, the state's capacity for real influence on social life was greatly limited.

The strength of anti-state resistance could also be witnessed in other fields, for instance education. The school system in Valais was significantly underdeveloped compared to the other Swiss cantons. For decades, the education problem was a political issue between liberals and the church, Catholic resistance and the distrustful communities; the weakness of the cantonal state had hampered the creation of an efficient educational system. Accordingly, the new education law of 1873 was largely unapplied. In 1875, the federal exams of recruits revealed the seriousness of the problem, since the results obtained by the young people from Valais were the lowest in the whole Confederation. It came as a shock to the canton, but the economic constraints described above hindered the adaptation of the educational system until the end of the century.²¹

This historical weakness of the cantonal state reinforced the importance of informal solidarities in the organization of a political and social consent, giving rise to quite a special model of state functioning.

An alpine Microstate

The falsifier Farinet exploited family networks and local solidarities to escape the law, and one could assume that this was in opposition to an institutional logic and a formal, rationalised state, that is a state acting on the basis of objective provisions. In reality, however, the state did not behave in a substantially different way. From the beginning, the local legitimacy of the cantonal state was essentially based on personal collusion and cooperation inside familiar networks and patronage system relationships. The creation of the 'modern state' after 1798 did not remove such informal logics in the name of Weber's rationality; rather it strengthened them.²²

François Reynauld has studied reproduction conditions among the local elite in the Bagnes Valley, scene of Farinet's first actions, showing the central role of familiar relationships in organising the continuation and the collaboration of the groups holding power.²³ These relationships remained intact in the political culture of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century: the local elite not only kept on nourishing a strictly endogamous marriage politics, but also a specific cult of kin and family solidarity.²⁴

These characteristics are partially explained by the specificities of the alpine regions: in a mountain agro-pastoral society, for centuries political control was an essential element of allocation of economic resources: and this control was ensured by extremely strong familiar or patronage solidarities. The wood trade represents quite a typical example: in Valais, as in Ticino, exploitation of the forests in the nineteenth century was promoted to a great extent by persons strictly linked to political power. The same holds for the mercenary service abroad, also controlled by the families holding power.²⁵

The distribution of local resources among a limited elite was encouraged by geographic and personal proximity in a small state, widely excluding external competition. In this sense, I speak of an 'alpine microstate', as a milieu where acquaintance, personal collusion and neighbourhood ensured power. The use of personal and patronage solidarities, however, also has to be regarded in relation to the anti-state tradition we have dealt with above. The distrustfulness towards institutions compelled the elite to search for legitimacy mainly through personal connections, patronage protection and distribution of favours. The fiscal weakness of the state reinforced this tendency, preventing the consolidation of strong institutions. The

relevance of informal networks for credit circulation, social security and protection in case of crisis encouraged the exercise of patronage by politicians and their families.

During the second half of the century, this personalised character of the state remained very intense and tended to assume pronounced peculiarities. In 1848–57, after the failure of the radical experiment, the conservative regime exploited the networks of the patronage system in order to establish an almost exclusive supremacy and use the institutions at its own discretion.

From the beginning, a succession of scandals – fraud, payment of bribes, manipulation of electoral circles – were denounced by the press. The conservative regime, for instance, multiplied in the municipal bureaus: in 1858, the ‘Gazette du Valais’ quoted examples of places where the municipality employed more than fifty employees – a method primarily used to provide political friends with work and income.²⁶

The efforts made in favour of economic and structural modernization did not weaken these peculiarities; on the contrary, they strengthened them. The political parties, in order to get hold of local power and political loyalty generously distributed favours and opportunities for profit. The Banque Cantonale, too, as mentioned above, was mostly used as the party’s source of cash, in order to assign jobs and credits to the conservative allies of Alexis Allet.²⁷ And the conservative leader exercised personal power that took on characteristics similar to those of dictatorship. Alain Clavien’s view of this era of cantonal politics is revelatory: the Allet regime was an example of ‘predatory mentality, confusing the State’s interests with its own interests and considering the government as a reserve of profits meant for friends’.²⁸ The weak alpine

microstate needed personal and patronage solidarities to survive and adapt to the new economic conditions.

Synthesis: a primitive Society?

There is therefore a significant link between social banditry, the logics supporting it and the construction of the state apparatus in its actual functioning. The obstinate resistance to institutional reinforcement, and especially to the fiscal basis of the state, hindered the consolidation of strong institutions able to intervene significantly in local society. On the other hand, institutional weakness and the strength of the alternative networks made it easier for the ruling class to make extensive use of personal structures to legitimate and strengthen their power. This dilemma is evident in the highly ambiguous attitude of the local state representatives towards Farinet and his accomplices.

Both in Ticino and in Valais, the population's support for banditry and resistance to the state did not prevent the formalization of political mechanisms – mainly under the pressure of the Confederation – but it deeply affected the actual practice of the state bodies, hampering real centralization of the state, the reinforcement of its financial basis, and its efficient action at the social level – for instance in the field of education.

It is still necessary to be cautious. Certainly the Valais and the Ticino are not the only examples where state action has been used by personal and patronage networks. The state is always made up of people and is always subject to different uses: the present time gives us countless examples thereof.

What interests us here is to understand the specific logics of a historic configuration. What happened in Valais is not comparable to the instrumentalization of the state by criminal networks, such as the classic Sicilian mafia or the forms of 'mafia'

proliferating today in various Eastern countries. Although they may have some similarities, they remain distinct phenomena.

In the case of Valais at the end of the nineteenth century, I would speak instead of double institutional and political loyalty. The state was not refused as a whole, but it was accepted only under certain conditions: its formal rules represent an organizational model along with others, and it is constantly in competition with the logics of personal and informal solidarities.

Moreover, these are not forms of political archaism. Eric Hobsbawm and the scholars following in his footsteps have considered forms of social banditry comparable to Farinet's adventure as phenomena of a transition period: traditional resistances against the transition to a market economy, to a society with stronger and more efficient state power. At first glance, Farinet seems to confirm this view, embodying strong symbols of the traditional Valais. However, this interpretation is only partially correct: differently from Hobsbawm's suggestions, the logics alternative to the state do not inexorably disappear following political and economic development. They rather interlace with the evolution of the institutions, deeply influencing state transformations. It is possible to affirm that they adapt to the state's political forms, but they continue to act underground to limit, influence and manipulate, when feasible, institutions and their representatives.

Conversely, it would be wrong to consider the social networks supporting Farinet's banditry only as the expression of a traditional or 'primitive' society,²⁹ struggling to defend pre-state agricultural logics. If we consider the closest collaborators of Farinet, we see that they often were, in their way, entrepreneurs: they were not poor farmers, related to the traditional sectors of the agro-pastoral economy; they were often

looking for opportunities in innovative sectors and acted through contact networks between small entrepreneurs, tradesmen or tourist operators.

The above-mentioned François Frachebourg was a leather tanner operating in Martigny-Bourg, active in local trade; Louis Luisier was a small tradesman in stone stoves – a sector that fairly developed in the Bagnes Valley during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His liberal family had been closely linked to the development of such activity in the nineteenth century. Luisier himself left his native village to settle in Martigny, likely looking for better trade channels. In this small town it seems that he tried to start businesses in new fields, buying a tannery and becoming the partner of the above-mentioned Frachebourg. But his closest contacts remained mostly in the area of stone stoves, where his accomplice and brother-in-law, Jean-Pierre Cretton operated.

Maurice-Eugène Maret, another among the foremost of Farinet's accomplices, was not a conservative mountain farmer, fond of the land; he actually tried different jobs. The sources refer to him as a 'mineur' (miner), but Maret was above all one of the pioneers of local tourism. In the 1860s he was the first person to open a business in Fionney, in the upper part of the Bagnes Valley: a place mainly meant for the first alpinists and explorers visiting the most imposing peak of the region.³⁰ It should not be forgotten that Fionnay was the first dynamic centre of local tourism which, at the end of the century, counted various hotels and restaurants built by the wealthiest and most influential local investors.

Also the Bessard brothers, liberals too, and Luisier's relatives involved in the Farinet investigation, were not simple mountain farmers; they were among the first well-known alpine guides in the region since they made some prestigious ascents.³¹ In conclusion, the Farinet 'friends' were active in the most dynamic fields of the regional

economy. Of course this dynamic is moderate in this mountain region, far from the economic and political centres: in their way, however, Luisier, Maret and people like them tried to exploit the opportunities of their time in new sectors.

From this perspective, nineteenth-century banditry was not opposed, but rather linked to certain capitalistic developments and to the ‘modernization’ of Valais: trade, banks, mail, railways, tourism and money circulation created new contact networks, new opportunities and also new temptations. Farinet and his accomplices largely took advantage of this infrastructure and these opportunities. In another context and in another time they might have been successful small-scale entrepreneurs.

Notes

¹ See the synthesis of the impressive historical and artistic production on Farinet in Alain Bagnoud, *Saint Farinet* (Vevey, 2005).

² For all the elements of the various investigations of Farinet and his accomplices, the indispensable source is André Donnet (ed.), *Farinet devant la justice valaisanne (1869–1880): dossiers de procédure pénale, 2 vols* (Lausanne, 1980).

³ Donnet, *Farinet*, p. 398 Donnet [Angabe des Bandes fehlt@].

⁴ Donnet, *Farinet*, esp. p. 224 [Angabe des Bandes fehlt@].

⁵ Paul Hugger, *Sozialrebelln und Rechtsbrecher in der Schweiz: eine historisch-volkskundliche Studie* (Zürich, 1976).

⁶ See the essay by André Holenstein ‘Empowering Interactions’ in this volume. For Switzerland, see for instance Andreas Suter, *Der schweizerische Bauernkrieg von 1653: Politische Sozialgeschichte – Sozialgeschichte eines politischen Ereignisses* (Tübingen, 1997); Andreas Würzler, *Unruhen und Öffentlichkeit. Städtische und ländliche Protestbewegungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1995); André Holenstein, ‘Der Bauernkrieg von 1653. Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen einer gescheiterten Revolution’, in Jonas Römer (ed.), *Bauern, Untertanen und Rebellen. Zur Geschichte eidgenössischer*

Landbevölkerungen im Ancien Régime (Zürich, 2004), pp. 28–85. This influence of the social movements is still to be studied for the nineteenth century.

⁷ ‘... je dors dessus un bon matelas et pour le crucifix à côté de mon lit j’ai mon revolver à douze coups et des stylets bien aiguisés pour mes défendre des gendarmes’. Lettre of J.-S. Farinet to his brother Placide Ronc, 2 February 1870, in Donnet, *Farinet*, pp. 116–20, here p. 119 [Angabe des Bandes fehlt@].

⁸ Sion, 28 February 1880. Rapport au conseiller d’état A. Walther, remplaçant du chef du département de justice et police, in Donnet, *Farinet*, pp. 506–12, here pp. 506f [Angabe des Bandes fehlt@].

⁹ Jean Nicolas, *La rébellion française* (Paris, 2002), pp. 91–117.

¹⁰ Bagnoud, esp. pp. 36–47.

¹¹ For the family ties and the history of the families in this valley, see *Familles de Bagnes du XIIIe au XXe siècle. Généalogie, histoire, étymologie, armoiries, 5 vols* (Le Châble, 2006–2007, currently printed@).

¹² Many examples in the local court protocols, for instance ACB J97–105 [Abk ACB bei erster Nennung ausschreiben].

¹³ Particularly useful for the history of Valais in the nineteenth century are Alain Clavien, ‘La modernisation du Valais’, in Philippe Cudry et al. (eds), *Histoire du Valais* (Sion, 2002), vol. 3, pp. 581–635; Groupe valaisan de sciences humaines (ed.), *Histoire de la démocratie en Valais (1798–1914)* (Sion, 1979); Michel Salamin, *Le Valais de 1798 à 1940* (Sierre, 1978).

¹⁴ Jean-Yves Gabbud, *La bataille de Corboraye* (Martigny, 1994).

¹⁵ André Donnet, *La Révolution valaisanne de 1798* (Lausanne, 1984); Alexandra Moulin and Thomas Antonietti (eds), *1798. Revolution im Wallis – Révolution en Valais* (Sion, 1998); Sandro Guzzi, *Logiche della rivolta rurale: insurrezioni contro la Repubblica Elvetica nel Ticino meridionale (1798–1803), prefazione di Giovanni Levi* (Bologna, 1994).

¹⁶ Until 1798 the regions of the western Valais were territories subject to the german speaking eastern Valais, the so-called ‘Republik der 7 Zehnden’.

¹⁷ Clavien, esp. pp. 583–6. – In Ticino, in 1890, the government was again overthrown by an armed coup d’état, cf. Raffaello Ceschi, ‘Politica a fucilate’, in Raffaello Ceschi, *Ottocento ticinese* (Locarno, 1986), pp. 31–46.

¹⁸ Clavien, p. 585.

¹⁹ Michel Rey, 'Le régime Allet', in Groupe valaisan de sciences humaines (ed.), *Histoire de la démocratie en Valais (1798–1914)* (Sion, 1979), pp. 193–214, esp. pp. 200f.

²⁰ In 1894, the standard public expenses amounted to approximately 13.15 francs per inhabitant in the Valais, versus 14.55 in Lucerne, 19.15 in Uri, 38.34 in Ticino, 42.60 in Zurich and 48.90 in Berne: *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, ed. by Heiner Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer, unter der Leitung von Hansjörg Siegenthaler (Zürich, 1996), pp. 971 and 94f. (author's elaboration).

²¹ Elisabeth Roux, 'Le régime de Torrenté', in Groupe valaisan de sciences humaines (ed.), *Histoire de la démocratie en Valais (1798–1914)* (Sion, 1979), pp. 215–28, here p. 224.

²² Sandro Guzzi-Heeb, 'Über die steigende Bedeutung von Verwandten in bäuerlichen Gesellschaften. Clans, Sippen, Verwandtschaftsnetze im Unterwallis (1650–1850)', in Jonas Römer (ed.), *Bauern, Untertanen und Rebellen. Zur Geschichte eidgenössischer Landbevölkerungen im Ancien Régime* (Zürich, 2004), pp. 187–205; see Luigi Lorenzetti, 'Les élites "tessinoises" du XVIIe au XIXe siècle: alliances et réseaux familiaux', in Anne-Lise Head, Luigi Lorenzetti and Béatrice Veyrassat (eds), *Familles, parenté, réseaux en Occident (XVIIe–XXe siècles). Mélanges offerts à Alfred Perrenoud* (Genève, 1999), pp. 207–26.

²³ François Raynauld, *Formation et évolution d'une élite dans une vallée alpestre. Le cas de Bagnes en Valais (Suisse). Mémoire présenté à la faculté des études supérieures d'anthropologie* (Université de Montréal, 1976, Manuscript in the Swiss National Library).

²⁴ Roux, pp. 215f.

²⁵ On these aspects, see Sandro Guzzi-Heeb, 'Unternehmensführung und knappe Ressourcen. Die Papierfabrik von Vouvry, der grosse Stockalper und die Eigenart der Walliser Wirtschaftsentwicklung (17.–19. Jahrhundert)', in Werner Bellwald and Sandro Guzzi-Heeb (eds), *Ein industriefeindliches Volk? Fabriken und Arbeiter in den Walliser Bergen* (Baden, 2006), pp. 127–59; Raffaello Ceschi, 'Strade, boschi e migrazioni', in Raffaello Ceschi (ed.), *Storia del cantone Ticino. L'Ottocento* (Bellinzona, 1998) pp. 183–214.

²⁶ Gazette du Valais, 25 February 1858, quoted in Rey, pp. 195f.

²⁷ Rey, pp. 203–13. This is not a isolated case in the alpine cantons: in Ticino very similar facts occurred at the end of the nineteenth century having their acme in the bank crisis of 1914, with the bankruptcy of

various institutions; see Angelo Rossi, *E noi, che figli siamo ... : cento anni di sviluppo economico nel Ticino* (Canobbio, 1988), pp. 9–35.

²⁸ Clavien, p. 593.

²⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1963).

³⁰ Marthe Carron et al., *Eveil du tourisme dans le Val de Bagnes* (Bagnes, 1983), p. 26.

³¹ Justinien Bessard (1841–1929), weaver, was a reputed alpine guide like his brothers Séraphin and Joseph-Etienne. With his brother-in-law Justin Fellay he was one of the promoters of alpism in the Bagnes Valley. He realised more than a dozen important first ascents, and the current southern peak of Berney was called *Pointe Justin Bessard* by Eugène Colomb; cf. *Les familles de Bagnes*, vol. 1, p. 71; Marthe Carron et al., p. 127; Donnet, *Farinet*, I, pp. 87–90.