

Political posters and Corsican nationalist mobilisation. 1970-1990.

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For a few years, many political scientists and sociologists have tried to go beyond the classical approach of collective mobilisations, based on the study of organisational aspects, the recruitment of activists or the structures of political opportunities. However, the exploration of the repertoires of action shows that some means of mobilisation, which are not inherently political, have been understudied until now (Cadiou et al., 2006). This includes songs, artistic repertoires (Balasinsky & Mathieu, 2020), funeral commemorations (Latté, 2015), iconography (Crettiez & Piazza, 2012; Campos et al., 2021) and posters (Dezé, 2007). For example, Mathieu Petithomme (2015) proposed an interesting approach on the memorial production of the *abertzale* movement in the Basque Country, emphasising in particular the instrumental use of political posters.

Regarding Corsican nationalism – even though it is a specific and very interesting mobilisation (Siroky et al., 2021) –, the academic literature is much less developed than that which deals with such emblematic cases as Catalonia or Scotland. Unsurprisingly, the question of the aesthetics of the Corsican nationalist movement was even more neglected. However, the last few years have shown significant progress in this respect. The first of us has been especially concerned with the question of nationalist mural iconography (Crettiez & Piazza, 2015), which often shares the same ambition as posters, but is even more visible because it is much more durable. Note that it was a comparative approach, dealing not only with Corsica but also with the Basque Country and Northern Ireland.

The second of us edited a book focusing on Corsican protest posters between 1970 and 1990 (Fazi, 2017), in which the first authored a contribution. Thanks to fifteen private and institutional suppliers, we were able to collect and digitise more than 400 posters, which made up the corpus of the research. A large part of these posters was produced by, or at least is linked to, the regionalist and then nationalist Corsican movement. Thus, in this contribution, we still rely on the corpus of *Guarda fratellu!*, in order to clarify the place of art and artists in the overall communication of a social and political protest movement.

In a first section, we will present the Corsican nationalist movement, and in particular the period of reference of the corpus, 1970-1990. This is all the more necessary as the protest repertoire used during this period was particularly suited to unconventional political communication, where the poster is a tool more important than for institutionalised parties. In a second section, we will focus on the question of poster production, which refers to the involvement of recognised artists, but also to their place in the overall propaganda of Corsican nationalist organisations. In a third section, we will specify the different aims and functions of Corsican nationalist posters, such as to make known, to warn, to move, to denounce, or to glorify. All these objectives refer to the construction of new representations and cognitive frameworks, which is essential for any social movement.

Corsican nationalism, contentious politics and unconventional communication

In the academic literature on sub-state nationalism, Corsican nationalism is clearly under-represented. This can be explained in part by its relatively late appearance, in the 1970s. However, its historical background is significant. During the 18th century, Europe as a whole was aware of the Corsican national liberation struggle against the Republic of Genoa, which had ruled the island since the 13th century.

In 1729, the Corsicans revolted against the Genoese ruler, and adopted two first constitutional laws in 1735 and 1736. From 1755 to 1769, under the leadership of Pascal Paoli, they built a genuine nation-state (Avon-Soletti, 1999). However, Genoa maintained control over the coastal towns and sovereignty *de jure*. Hence, it conceded to France the exercise of its sovereign rights in 1768. Despite their overwhelming military inferiority, the Corsicans refused to be submitted to this new ruler. The conquest took a year and was followed by a violent repression. Finally, in 1793 Corsica seceded from revolutionary France, and then allied with the other great superpower of the era to form the short-lived Anglo-Corsican kingdom (1794-1796).

In Corsica, other factors were strongly correlated with the presence of nationalist mobilisations (Sorens 2012). Geography was one of them. The insular situation was an obstacle to national integration to France, on political, economic and cultural levels. Language was another (Fazi 2020b). For over a century, very few Corsicans could speak French. The translation of official acts into Italian was banned only in 1852. In 1915, the transmission rate of Corsican as mother tongue to five-years-old children was still about 85%. Finally, French governments also tended to ignore the development of the island, making cultural frustration, economic deprivation and the rise of peripheral nationalism all the more likely (Fazi, 2014).

Nevertheless, in the 19th century, there were no more mobilisations or intellectual productions based on the Corsican national idea. The process of integration into France was far from easy, but the Corsican notables fully subscribed to it. In a poor, rural, low educated and industrialised society, these notables never contemplated the formation of a Corsican national bourgeoisie. They preferred to act as indispensable intermediaries between the state and the people of the island by distributing the resources provided by the former, thus guaranteeing the social consensus and the loyalty of the latter to the French nation (Lenclud, 1986). This so-called "clan system" remained virtually unchallenged until the First World War.

The inter-war period was characterized by the emergence of an early autonomist movement that played an interesting intellectual role. Nevertheless, it was not a party but a small club, which refused to stand for election and finally lost all credibility because of its sympathy with Italian fascism (Leca, 1994).

Contemporary Corsican nationalism only appeared in the 1970s, and initially received a marginal share of the vote, even in regional elections (De la Calle & Fazi, 2010). It has experienced a strong electoral surge since 2008, following the breakdown of the party system and a sharp decline of armed violence, which prompted moderate and radical nationalist lists to merge and garner a significant share of the vote. In the 2010 and 2015 regional elections,