

THE IDENTITY OF PAPAL SOLDIERS IN THE EARLY MODERN AGE*

GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI

University San Raffaele, Rome

giampiero.brunelli@unisanraffaele.gov.it

Those who approach the history of the papal army in the 16th and the 17th centuries remain impressed by the disproportion between the conspicuous investments committed in the armed forces and the poor results obtained. Military expenditures – as Georg Lutz well demonstrated studying the budgets of the Papal State – in times of peace amounted to about a third of the Apostolic Chamber's net income; in times of war, or in moments of diplomatic crisis, they gobbled enormous sums. Moreover, considering the uses of human resources, during not even forty years of wars against the Turks and against the protestants (1569–1605), it appears that were enrolled expeditionary forces for a total of 50,000 soldiers. Furthermore, from 1549 onwards, a territorial militia which enlisted thousands of subjects (more than 83,000 in 1640) was in force in the provinces of the Papal State. Yet, in spite of this evidence, the efficiency of the papal military organization has always been very modest, especially in field proofs. As a result, many negative opinions about the papal armed forces came to light, from contemporaries' judgements, such as those of Francesco Guicciardini or Paolo Paruta, into the synthesis about the papal State written by Mario Caravale and Alberto Caracciolo. In the 19th century, the most important historian of the papacy, Ludwig von Pastor, explained this fact by correlating it to the nature of the office of Vicar of Christ.¹

Instead, in the present state of the studies, it does not seem possible to repeat the traditional thesis of a weakness of the papal army. The contradictory outcomes of social dynamics underlying the military institution appeared as one of the main reasons of the failure of papal military politics in the 16th and 17th

* Translated and adapted from G. Brunelli: 'Identità dei militari pontifici in età moderna. Questioni di metodo e uso delle fonti', in: C. Donati & B. R. Kroener (eds.): *Militari e società nell'Europa dell'età moderna*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008: 313–350.

¹ Concerning opinions about the papal army, see G. Brunelli: *Soldati del papa. Politica militare e nobiltà nello Stato della Chiesa. 1560–1644*, Roma: Carocci, 2003: XI and XXII, notes 1–2.

centuries. Equally rigid limits emerged in the papal monarchy's "Verfassung" (i.e., the constitution in its material sense). In fact, the specificity of "a form of government based on continual transformations"² did not seem able to assure solidity to the army: since composition and even organization of the forces were revised after each papal election, soldiers and officers could neither predict in which forms their service would have evolved, nor foresee what destiny their career perspectives would have had. Contemporaries knew that well, when – in the mid-sixteenth century – they warned that

soldiers who are at ecclesiastical princes' service do not serve as usual, and they are not able to continue in the service, in the way used by those who are at temporal princes' service. This occurs because of the frequent patrons' change. So, it is not surprising if they usually take care of their advantage more than of patrons' service.³

In other terms, officers and common soldiers seemed ready to enlist in the perspective of gaining social distinction, but – at the same time – they were not really willing to obey what they would have been ordered to do. So, the ambiguous results of the papal military politics oblige us to shift focus of our attention precisely on the mentality of those who joined the papal army. Only if we investigate the forms of self-presentation of soldiers, we could penetrate in a deeper way the substrate of the military institution, i.e., the motivational basis of the behaviour of officers and common soldiers in the various aspects of military life (garrisoning of strongholds; keeping the territorial control within the papal State; fighting at war). Only by looking at outcomes of the processes of self-identity construction can we measure the militarization level of the papal subjects enlisted in the army.

This problem could be formulated with the conceptual support of contemporary military sociology. Since officers and common soldiers did not adhere at all – or adhered only partially – to the purposes set by the military institution and did not methodically contribute to the performance of the tasks set for those purposes, it is necessary to wonder how and why the efforts of the papal military institutions have failed to attribute to their members an isomorphic identity, through coercion or consensual practises. So, a particular concept of identity is

² M. A. Visceglia: 'Factions in the sacred college', in: G. Signorotto & M. A. Visceglia (eds.): *Court and Politics in Early Modern Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 99–131, p. 103.

³ *Discorso di Giuseppe Grosso sopra le battaglie dello Stato ecclesiastico*, in the Vatican Apostolic Library, *Ottob. Lat. 757*, fols. 29r–34r, fol. 30v in particular.

needed for the goals of this research. Scholarship in this field has accumulated a quite incredible number of studies. As Gerald Izenberg has recently pointed out, “only the availability of large electronic databases enables scholars to survey the otherwise unmanageable numbers of books and articles in the humanities and social sciences with the word ‘identity’ in their titles, let alone their content”.⁴ Early modern Italian historiography has not escaped from the assignment of approaching both individual and collective identities. So, it is possible to name some area of interests. Regarding the macro processes, studying the phenomena of collective identification coincided with following the trace of the social ties of belonging. It has emerged that the subjects of States and the faithful of Churches passed from a generalized, multi-community membership, bonded to the medieval universalism, to a confessional and proto-national, but still multidimensional membership in the 16th and 17th centuries. Only in the 19th century did they gradually achieve a unidimensional, nationalist membership and a complete religious freedom. Moreover, from the point of view of early modern social history, studies about the social identity of aristocracies, about urban identity (and more generally, about territorial identity), as well as about gender identity have had the merit of giving an articulated and complex image of early modern society. So, the question about the relationships between society and individuals – and about the consequent “comparison between macro- and micro-analytical methods”⁵ – was more efficiently and directly approached, compared to the results obtained by 20th century historiography, based on a strictly functionalist conception of social action, corresponding with the certainty that “collective social actors exist as such because they are precisely considered as institutions”.⁶ Lastly, from the point of view of early modern political history, the construction of specific identities, shaped as new instances of citizenship, appeared as a process closely associated to the phenomenology of conflict, especially during the most important European revolutionary events.⁷

⁴ G. Izenberg: *Identity: The Necessity of a Modern Idea*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016: 1.

⁵ See M. A. Visceglia: ‘La nobiltà nel Mezzogiorno d’Italia in età moderna’, *Storica* 3, 1997: 49–96 (in particular p. 95, in Italian).

⁶ J. Revel: ‘L’institution et le sociale’, in: *Le formes de l’expérience. Une autre histoire sociale*, sous la direction de Bernard Lepetit, Paris: Albin Michèl, 1995: 63–84 (in particular p. 69, in French).

⁷ See P. Prodi & V. Marchetti: *Problemi di identità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna: Clueb, 2001: 179–319; P. Prodi: ‘Evoluzione e metamorfosi delle identità collettive tra medioevo ed età moderna’, in: A. Prosperi (ed.): *Il piacere del testo. Saggi e studi per Albano Biondi*, vol. II, Roma: Bulzoni, 2001: 625–643; M. A. Visceglia: *Identità sociali. La nobiltà a Napoli nella prima*

These are only a few examples. We might enumerate many others. It is more useful to look at a case study more related to our issue. In 1990, Sabina Loriga published a paper about the military identity of the Piedmontese nobility in the 18th century. She analyzed the not surprising fact that many officers in the Piedmontese army were aristocrats, through the Eliasian “formula of need”, which underlaid the world of the court: it was the court – Norbert Elias warned – that “offered the people forming it satisfaction of the various needs that were constantly reproduced in them”.⁸ Concretely, Loriga examined trajectories and experiences of officers, which revealed “the gap at times tormented between their physical presence in the army and their ideological adhesion”.⁹ In fact, while noble provincial officers evidently aimed for the military life because they were seeking an instrument of distinction, young high aristocrats with the same rank did not leave proofs of a deep identification with the institution. They seemed to consider the army years just as a phase, sometimes even as a mere channel of access to the court. Anyway, by this paper, the identity issue entered the history of the early modern Italian military organizations. Loriga used many original sources, making it possible to listen again to the speeches of Piedmontese noble officers. However, focusing on what Paul Ricoeur called the “narrative identity”¹⁰ of the social actors, she finished to neglect the capability of the military institution in creating a cultural model, able to attract a significant amount of population in the Kingdom of Sardinia. It was not a fortuitous result. Later, in her book *Soldiers. The military institution in the 18th century Piedmont* (Venice, Marsilio 1992, in Italian), Loriga declared her rejection of the theories which, after Ervin Goffman and Michel Foucault,¹¹ had considered the army as a “total institution”; instead, she advanced the thesis to look at it as a network of interdependencies

età moderna, Milano: Unicopli 1998; M. Bellabarba & R. Stauber (eds.): *Identità territoriali e cultura politica nella prima età moderna*, Bologna & Berlin: Il Mulino & Duncker & Humblot, 1998; G. Chittolini & P. Johanek (eds.): *Aspetti e componenti dell'identità urbana in Italia e Germania, secoli XIV–XVI*, Bologna & Berlin: Il Mulino & Duncker & Humblot, 2003; F. Benigno: *Specchi della rivoluzione: conflitto e identità politica nell'Europa moderna*, Roma, Donzelli, 1999.

⁸ N. Elias: *The Court Society*, New York: Pantheon, 1983: 158.

⁹ S. Loriga: ‘L'identità militare come aspirazione sociale: nobili di provincia e nobili di corte nel Piemonte della seconda metà del Settecento’, *Quaderni storici* 25, 1990: 445–471, p. 463 in particular (quotation translated from Italian).

¹⁰ P. Ricoeur: ‘L'identité narrative’, *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 95, 1991: 35–47, in particular p. 35 (quotation translated from French).

¹¹ See E. Goffman: *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1961; M. Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by A. Sheridan, London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1977.

between people. This invitation not to consider the institutions simply as spaces shaped by prescriptive requirements, which were imposing an approved culture or a set of practices, appears reasonable. However, since the aim of this paper is to investigate identities within the papal army, it remains necessary to examine both the auto-representations of officers and common soldiers and the forms of identity proposed by the high command of the armed forces of the pope. For this purpose, it could be useful to reread the proposal of a sociology of professional identities by Claude Dubar (1945–2015).

Dubar based his field researches on a deep analysis of theories of socialization.¹² He firmly denied that socialization could be understood as an integration of men and women into society, obtained through transmission from above of rules, of values, of models, of practice. Instead, he observed that construction of identities maintains a processual character, furthering the individual/collective dichotomy. So, social identity appears to be built by two distinct processes, which cannot be attributed to the same matrix: we see on one hand actions of identity attribution performed by institutions, and on the other, the “active internalization” of identitarian forms by individuals. The outputs do not coincide with a mechanical incorporation of identities produced and attributed by institutions. Instead, social actors seem able to reduce the distance between the two matrices just mentioned in various ways. For example, one can choose to defend his consolidated identity or to aspire to an “anticipatory” identity, recalling a definition of Robert K. Merton, or to define criteria and sometimes even conditions for the assumption of a new identity.

In short, identity strategies are complex operations, which cannot be reduced to “an authoritarian labelling with predefined identity”.¹³ This notion of the concept, even if formulated for the contemporary world of labour, perfectly suits to the early modern age: in fact, showing two distinct origins in the identification process, it is a good instrument to define the topic of this paper. So, for evaluating the deep reasons of the generally poor performances expressed by the papal army, it will not be enough to keep searching for the weight of an alleged “military vocation” in the identification processes. The difficult coexistence of behaviors dictated by honor, convenience, fidelity is well known, after a long

¹² See C. Dubar: *La socialisation: construction des identités sociales et professionnelles* (5th ed.), Paris: Armand Colin, 2015. The quotation is from the Italian translation of the 2000 edition (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004, p. 133).

¹³ This quotation too is from the Italian translation of the 2000 edition (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004: 136).

season of studies, especially in the case of the military aristocracy.¹⁴ Instead, the forms of self-presentation of those who entered the papal army are still to be compared with the cultural proposals outlined by the papal military politics. For this purpose, first of all, it will be necessary to recall a peculiar literature, which culminated, between the 16th and 17th centuries, into the figure of the *soldier of the Holy Church*: a model which represented, summed up and simplified, all the sources of legitimation available for the papal army. Secondly, it will be needed to examine the regulatory and judicial space established jointly with the papal military institutions. Finally, it will be possible to mention some tangible proofs of identitarian belonging. Concerning these topics, the large collections of letters and records in the Vatican Archive and in the Vatican Library may help a lot.

A few words about chronology: the starting point could be the symbolic year 1530, in which the peace of Bologna was signed. After the end of the Franco-Spanish war in Italy, in fact, the papacy sought to restore the authority and strength of the Apostolic See, within a universalistic frame, even preparing itself to fight the enemies of the Church. Similarly, it was in the thirties of the 16th century that a cultural season claiming the compatibility between Christianity and the exercise of arms began and spread. Its opening product was the dialogue *Democrates* by Juan Ginès of Sepulveda.¹⁵ The Peace of Westphalia, when the relevance of the papal role in the European politics dramatically decreased, should represent the natural ending of this timespan. Anyway, outside of the limits of this paper, it would be desirable to check whether the decades between the 17th and the 18th century, when the weak papal army was not able even to defend the State territory, coincided with the start of other models of military identities.

Regarding the problems of sources, it seems useful – even in the phase of collecting materials – to maintain the distinction between the two mentioned levels of the identification process (attribution of identity by institutions and introjection of identitarian forms by individuals).

First of all, we consider the identities ascribed by the institutions. Thanks to the historiography, from James Turner Johnson's works to those of Adriano Prosperi, the counter-reformation cultural initiatives which claimed the legitimacy of a Just

¹⁴ See, for example, the conference papers in A. Bilotto, C. Mozzarelli & P. Del Negro (eds.): *I Farnese, Corti, guerra e nobiltà in antico regime*. Atti del convegno, Roma 1997, Roma: Bulzoni, 1997.

¹⁵ See Juan Ginès de Sepulveda *De convenientia militaris disciplinae cum christiana religione dialogus qui inscribitur Democrates*, Romae, apud Antonium Bladum, 1535 (<https://books.google.it/books?id=giU8AAAAcAAJ>).

War (or better of a Holy War against heretics and Turks) are known in detail.¹⁶ The collection of works on the Christian soldier, or having reference to it, belongs to this literature, proliferated in many European countries. However, Christian soldiers do not mean necessarily papal soldiers. During the 16th century, the only book directly connected with papal military politics was *Il Soldato Cristiano* (*The Christian Soldier*) by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino. It was a little book released in first edition in 1569 in Rome (by the Dorico publishers), which had a remarkable editorial fortune and launched a new literature about the specific moral behaviour needed while fighting the enemies of Christianity. Possevino wrote this text driven by Francisco Borja, third Superior General of the Society of Jesus, who wanted an easy instrument available for the Fathers sent as confessors together with troops engaged in France against Huguenots. So, the “Instructions for those who shall be sent in France to the papal camp in April 1569” suggested the recourse to “the pious tiny book, such as the one which has been done”.¹⁷ The Fathers must have read it to the papal soldiers which fought at the battle of Moncontour. However, this was not a proposal specifically directed to the papal subjects enlisted in the army: the aim was achieved by another book *Il soldato di Santa Chiesa* (*The Soldier of the Holy Church*), released by Cesare Palazzolo in 1606.

The author held the role of Commissary general of the papal army. His book also repeated the catalogue of the peculiar moral qualities necessary for a real Christian soldier. Yet, the differences between the two books are significant. First of all, while Possevino treated rather coldly the exemplarity of the ancients (called “li etnici”) and their literature, from Xenophon to Vegetius, Palazzolo clearly pointed to the Romans as the population which had the best army, fully described in his pages. From this springs the revival of an uncompromising theocratic universalism, as revealed in chapter eight, entitled “Roman power reestablished and expanded by Christ Our Lord, by means of St. Peter, and by the other pontiffs,

¹⁶ See J. T. Johnson: *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War: Religious and Secular Concepts 1200–1740*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975; A. Prosperi: ‘The Just War in the Italian Political Thought of the Counter-Reformation’, in: *America, Apocalisse e altri saggi*, Pisa: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1999: 249–269 (in Italian).

¹⁷ See Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, *Inst. I I7a*, fols. 290r–291v, in particular fol. 291r. See also Vincenzo Lavenia, *Between Christ and Mars. Discipline and catechesis of the Christian soldier in the modern age*, in *From the history yards. Liber amicorum for Paolo Prodi*, edited by Gian Paolo Brizzi and Giuseppe Olmi. – Bologna: CLUEB, 2007: 35–54 (in Italian).

his successors”.¹⁸ In fact, following St. Leo Magnus, Palazzolo remarked that the Roman armies had allowed the institution of a big Empire, so that the Christian message could spread very quickly and he significantly added that the Church had “order, authority and durability from God himself. Such a thing never happened to the Roman Empire before and did not to any other Emperor, King, Republic or Princes”.¹⁹ Therefore, papal subjects enlisted in the army of St. Peter’s successors should have been proud to serve Christ and the entire Christianity.

In 1606, on the eve of a possible war against the Republic of Venice, the legitimation of the papal army appeared completely sanctioned: according to Palazzolo, since the temporal power was passed on the Apostolic See “so that through that nerve would be parried the blows by the enemies of the Church”, the papal military organization was tasked “with defending the Catholic faith and the jurisdiction that Christ transmitted to it”, as well as, obviously, with protecting the Ecclesiastical State.²⁰ Palazzolo then proceeded to illustrate the territorial troops militia. Possevino did not analyze any army organization of particular States. In another of his books, *Bibliotheca selecta*,²¹ he fleetingly mentioned the projects by the popes Pius V and Gregorius XIII, as well as by the king of Spain, Philipp II, to institute military schools, shaped on the model of Jesuit seminaries. Yet, he was not really interested in the evolution of the papal military politics. Instead, Palazzolo clarified that he was talking about the subjects of the papal state, providing a set of the most appropriate instructions, sure that the troops of the Ecclesiastical State should be “just as a mirror for the others”.²² First of all, The main emphasis was placed on checking the new recruits’ motivations: those who did not understand “what were the Church, the Papacy, the priesthood, surely did not deserve to enter the papal territorial militia”.²³

Palazzolo made then a list of the typical religious features in the daily life of a soldier who was supposed to fight for the Church: practice of the Mass, frequent

¹⁸ “Il soldato di Santa Chiesa per l’institutione alla pietà de i cento mila Fanti, & de i diece mila Soldati à cavallo delle Militie dello Stato Ecclesiastico”, posto in luce dal Sig. Cesare Palazzuolo, Roma: appresso Luigi Zannetti, MDCVI: 16 (on line: <https://books.google.it/books?id=Jj5bAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it>)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 17 (in Italian).

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 21–22 (in Italian).

²¹ See A. Possevino: *Bibliotheca selecta qua agitur de ratione studiorum in historia, in disciplinis, in salute omnium*, Venetiis: apud Altobellum Salicatum, 1603: 204–206 (<https://books.google.it/books?id=VaQWEWVlgHYC>).

²² C. Palazzolo: *Il soldato di Santa Chiesa, op.cit.*: 26 (in Italian).

²³ *Ibid.*: 28 (in Italian).

communion, meditations and examinations of conscience, spiritual exercises directed by skilled confessors. However, in his opinion, the final purpose of these experiences was not, as for Possevino, to be able to deal calmly and vigorously with the fight against the enemies of the Church, but the simple possibility, for those who were enlisted, “to be called soldiers of the militia of the Holy Church”,²⁴ i.e., to be suitable soldiers of the papal territorial non-professional corps. Therefore, he was interested in other specific issues: the organization of the militia, the different tasks of its officers, even the armaments.

Il Soldato di Santa Chiesa does not have to be considered a counter-reformation fanatical text. The book was released, as its title confirms, “for the instruction to piety of the 100,000 infantrymen and of the 10,000 cavalrymen of the papal Militia”; its author was a long experienced officer, who fought at Moncontour against the Huguenots in 1569 and who was Commissary general in 1606. This tiny work appears to be a sort of official handbook and therefore seems like a good source for investigating the identity proposed for the papal armed forces, as well as the legislation for the army, issued between the 16th and 17th centuries.

Even without recalling functionalist theories about the role of the military within the process of State-building, as Samuel E. Finer did,²⁵ surely the papal army, too, was a permanent institution, which needed to be regulated by distinctive rules. So, it not only had its officers, but also its own law. Around the mid-sixteenth century, for example, the militiamen obtained tax exemptions and jurisdictional privileges, which lasted from then onwards, until the end of the 18th century.²⁶ According to what was expressed in the 1690 edition of *Privilegi*, the Pope himself recognized that “soldiers enlisted in our Ecclesiastical State – being in service of this Holy See – have always been rewarded with many prerogatives of privileges, exemption and graces [...] in order to let them gain merits

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 35 (in Italian).

²⁵ See S. E. Finer: ‘State- and Nation-Building in Europe: The Role of the Military’, in: Ch. Tilly (ed.): *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975: 84–163.

²⁶ See G. Brunelli: ‘Powers and privileges. The militia troops in the papal State in 16th and 17th centuries’, *Cheiron* XII, 1995: fasc. 23, 105–129 (in Italian). The draft of the first edition of the Privileges (1554) is in the Archive of State of Rome, *Soldatesche e galere, Miscellanea*, 646, folios not numbered. News about the validity of these norms in 1796 in the *Gazzetta Universale: O Sieno Notizie Istoriche, Politiche, Di Scienze, Arti Agricoltura*, vol. XXIII of the year 1796, pp. 751–752 (<https://books.google.it/books?id=N4UDU7iNmQoC>).

and distinctions from our other subjects”.²⁷ Even after ending his service years, the militiaman received a certificate (a “patente”, in Italian), “so that the merit he gained by his long and honored service was profitable to him anywhere”.²⁸

In addition to the *Privilegi*, the rules for the territorial militia, printed from 1571 until at least 1674, also contributed to the development of a peculiar military identity. These texts, usually entitled *Chapters and laws to be absolutely observed by the militiamen and chivalrymen of the militia of the Ecclesiastical State by express order of His Holiness*,²⁹ were a sort of criminal code, which aimed to discipline the soldiers behavior, through repression of crimes, first of all those against public order and the civilians. Nearly all the other early modern States had similar worries. Yet, in the papal State, the rules for the militia and the correlated criminal laws found an original synthesis in these orders:

soldiers have to live in fear of God [...] so that they will be recognized as Christian and Ecclesiastical soldiers, honored, and not licentious.³⁰

Words were accurately chosen: soldiers were described as not only “Christians”, but mainly “Ecclesiastical” (namely in the service of the Apostolic See), and “honored”, an adjective which here means that they should have remained bound to the typical values of the military profession.

Sentences even more explicit, related to a peculiar identity of the papal soldier, are included in the general rules for the armies (*Bandi*, in Italian), which were released in occasion of military expeditions in the decades between the 16th and 17th centuries. For example, the orders for the troops engaged against the pretending duke of Ferrara Cesare d’Este in 1597 reminded to soldiers that they were serving “in an army which, carrying the name of Ecclesiastical, implied that their discipline, and manners of anybody had to be equal to those of clergymen”.³¹

²⁷ *Privilegi, esentioni, e gratie concedute dalla Santità di N. S. Alessandro papa VIII alli soldati delle militie dello Stato ecclesiastico*, in Vatican Secret Archive, *Miscell., Arm IV-V*, 73, fol. 80r (in Italian).

²⁸ *Ibid.*: Fondo Borghese, IV, 267, folder IX (“Patenti militari”), folios not numbered. In Italian.

²⁹ *Capitoli, et leggi da osservarsi inviolabilmente per ordine espresso della Santità di N. S. re dalle militie a piedi et a cavallo dello Stato Ecclesiastico*, Roma, Stamperia della Reverenda Camera Apostolica. In Italian.

³⁰ “Capitoli et leggi da osservarsi inviolabilmente per ordine espresso della Santità di N. Sig.re dalle militie a piedi et a cavallo dello Stato ecclesiastico”, March 12, 1614, in Archive of State of Rome, *Bandi, Armi*, 466, fols. 5r–14r, in particular fol. 10r. In Italian.

³¹ *General Edict Concerning Discipline (Editto generale sopra la disciplina*, in Italian. 1597), in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Miscell., Arm. IV-V*, 80, fol. 51r. In Italian.

During the same weeks of November, 1597, the papal Secretary wrote to the provincial governors, with instructions to convene the militia officers, so that they would convince their soldiers to enlist in the army sent against Ferrara. Once more, the words used were extremely significant: they had to show “the justness of the cause and the service that they could do for God, for their natural Prince and for the Holy Church”. Everybody – continued the letters to the governors – would have agreed to participate to a such a “saint” enterprise.³² So, it seemed that another holy war was beginning. Yet, it was not directed against Turks or Protestants, but against a member of the Este family, vicar of the Church in Ferrara since 1322. Further, the mentioned “service, which would have been done for the Blessed God”³³ did not consist in saving the Christianity from an actual threat, but in incorporating a disputed territory into the State of the Church. The political culture elaborated by the papal Secretary and by the high commands of the papal army was defining in details a peculiar identity for soldiers, just in moments of crisis with two Catholic statual entities, the Republic of Venice and the Duchy of Ferrara.

After these deployments, it was again up to the military legislation to consolidate the sketched identitarian forms. Firstly, the particular image of the papal soldier had to be protected from the pressure by civilians, always ready to appropriate privileges and immunities given to soldiers. So, threatening severe punishments, the edicts ordered that “no one dared to pretend to be a professional soldier of the Holy Church, nor made himself known as a soldier, whether accompanied by real ones”.³⁴ It was also considered a crime to use fake “bollettini”, i.e., military identification cards. Moreover, as well as in other Italian and European States, the military legislation tried to prevent soldiers’ violence against civilians. Since the third decade of the 17th century and until 1703, were released military general edicts (namely *Bandi generali per la soldatesca*, in Italian).³⁵ The 1625 edition began with a warning which coincided with a sharp attribution of identity:

³² Instructions to the city governors of Umbria, Marca and to the city governor of Viterbo, November 20, 1597, in Apostolic Vatican Library, *Barb. lat.* 5860, fols. 156v–157r. In Italian.

³³ *Idem*. In Italian.

³⁴ *Bando* of the governor of Rome, Domenico Marini, July 21, 1625, in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Miscell., Arm. IV–V*, 73, fol. 300r. In Italian.

³⁵ See *ibid.*: fols. 196r, 197r, 302r, 371r–378v, 379r–386v; see also J. R. Ruff: *Violence in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001: 39–40.

Soldiers of the army of His Holiness and mainly those which lodge in Rome have to live in fear of God; both officers and common soldiers have to perform their duty, with the care and promptness which are required for the good service of His Beatitude.³⁶

Records and documents by contemporary military judges show that these rules were enforced, if necessary, in an exemplary way.³⁷

As previously mentioned, the Swiss Guards, the papal chivalrymen, the soldiers from the garrison of Castel Sant'Angelo, namely the soldiers lodged in Rome and within the Vatican Palace, had to correspond before all others to the proposal of a peculiar identity for papal soldiers. They had to take holy communion at least once a year and had to abstain from blasphemy, otherwise they would have been subjected to corporal punishments, or fired, or even delivered to the Holy Office of the Inquisition.³⁸

Until the first decade of the 18th century, all these edicts were periodically republished, reshaping the peculiar identity outlined. In September 1708, during the mobilization caused by the War of Succession, a ceremony for the soldiers was held within the Jesuit church of Sant'Ignazio in Rome because, as repeated by a contemporary *Notice*, they were "more exposed because of their profession to dangers in their lives and consciences and therefore obliged more than all the others to live like Christians and in God's dread".³⁹ From the diary of Francesco Valesio, a well-known roman chronicle, it is possible to gain some detail of this "general holy communion for the soldiers". Entrance was forbidden to civilians; a medal with the blessing "in articulo mortis" was distributed to the troops.⁴⁰

Other sources offer suggestions that serve our purpose. When a papal army was sent in, its commander always received special instructions containing the campaign's aims. These documents included elements of identitarian forms, too. The instruction for the Count Sforza di Santa Fiora, commander in chief of the papal expeditionary corps sent in France in 1569, claimed that his officers and

³⁶ Edict by the Captain general of the Church Carlo Barberini, May 26, 1625, in Vatican Secret Archive, *Miscell., Arm. IV-V*, 73, fol. 297r.

³⁷ See, for example, the letters to Carlo and Taddeo Barberini, captains general of the Church, in the Vatican Apostolic Library, *Barb. lat.* 9317 (1630, in Italian).

³⁸ See the *Edicts* released between 1606 and 1671 in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Miscell., Arm. IV-V*, t. 73, fols. 242Ar-260v (in Italian).

³⁹ See the *Notificazione ibid.*: fol. 401r (in Italian).

⁴⁰ F. Valesio: *Diario di Roma*, IV, Milano: Longanesi, 1978 (in Italian).

soldiers had to demonstrate that they were “good Christians, and true Catholics”, which would defend the population “against the atrocities and the impiety of the Huguenots, and that they were not immoral and greedy men, which would commit robberies”.⁴¹ Also the commander of the papal contingent formed in 1593 and sent to Paris, in order to protect the Estates-General, had instructions to show everyone that the soldiers of the Pope were “catholic, obedient and loyal”.⁴² Clearer references are included in the instructions for the Avignon garrison commander. Pompeo Frangipane had instructions to make sure that the soldiers lived “in a Christian way and be good example so that they would be known as soldiers hired with pay from the Church”.⁴³

Between the 16th and the 17th century, sure that the Pope would have appreciated it, papal officers’ correspondences highlighted the Ecclesiastical State’s troops actions. When Gian Francesco Aldobrandini, captain general against the Turks during three campaigns, in 1595, 1597 and 1601, reported the capitulation of Strigonia (today Esztergom, in Hungary), he gave his uncle, pope Clement VIII, many details, claiming that it had to be clear “to all the other nations – namely Germans, Walloons, Italians too – that the castle was took by them”,⁴⁴ namely by his soldiers. Further, when news of the capture of Pápa (another city, in Hungary), arrived to the papal court in Rome, Clement VIII read them “avidly”, revealing great satisfaction and pride “because our army had a noteworthy role in it”.⁴⁵ In the same weeks, a *List of men dead and injured during the final assault on Pápa, on August 19, 1597* was delivered from the battlefield to Rome. It contained all their names, even those of common soldiers, divided by company. So, maybe for the first time in Western Europe, the military men gained their individuality through memory of casualties of a battle.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Instructions to Count Sforza di Santa Fiora, in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Fondo Pio* 112, fols. 20r–32r, fol. 21r in particular (in Italian).

⁴² Instructions to Rodolfo Baglioni, May 30, 1593, in: K. Jaitner (ed.): *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens’ VIII für die Nuntien und Legaten an den europäischen Fürstenhofen 1592–1605*, Tübingen: Niemayer, 1984: 130–134, p. 131 in particular (in Italian).

⁴³ Instructions to Pompeo Frangipane, March 10, 1606, in: S. Giordano (ed.): *Le istruzioni generali di Paolo V ai diplomatici pontifici. 1605–1621*, Tübingen: Niemayer, 2003: 347–352, p. 350 in particular (in Italian).

⁴⁴ Letter of Gianfrancesco Aldobrandini to Clement VIII, September 2, 1595, in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Fondo Borghese*, III, 96f, fols. 141r–143r, fol. 141v in particular (in Italian).

⁴⁵ See the letter of the cardinal nephew Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini to Gian Francesco Aldobrandini, September 6, 1597, *ibid.*: III, 10d, fol. 35v (in Italian).

⁴⁶ See the List of dead and wounded men during the assault of Pápa, August 19, 1597 in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Segr. Stato, Lettere di particolari*, 4, fol. 331r–v (in Italian).

Even the iconographic project of the decorations for the Sixtine and Pauline Chapels of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome reveals congruity with the proposal of a new identity for the papal soldiers. For example, the low relief in the Pauline Chapel, known in the recent art literature as "The Emperor Rudolph II attacks the Infidels", actually represents the papal expeditionary army enlisted in 1605 under the command of colonel Kollonitsch in order to assist the emperor himself in fighting the Turks in Hungary. Without doubt, the protagonist of the scene is not the imperial army, but the auxiliary forces sent by pope Paul V: in fact, not only his banner clearly shows the Borghese coat of arms, but the corresponding inscription is also perfectly readable: "[The pope] assisted the Emperor elected, king of Romans, Rudolph, who was fighting against the enemies of the Christian name in Hungary, with auxiliary troops".⁴⁷

After having told about the identitarian forms proposed within the papal military institution, it is useful to add some documents about the self-presentation both by officers and common soldiers. In speaking about the first, since the officers were usually noble, the aristocratic identity proved itself for a long time stronger than any army proposed forms of identity. This is generally true for every early modern State in 16th and 17th century and it also fits perfectly to the Ecclesiastical State, in which the nobility used to jealously defend its social status. So, even when serving in an army, an aristocrat would not have made an exception to the principle of keeping "always safe his place", "sempre salvo il proprio locho", as it was said in ancient Italian.⁴⁸ This rule of behavior could be expressed in a general way. Accepting new identitarian forms, especially by nobles, was subjected to a clear condition: an aristocrat would have entered the papal army to see his social status recognized, not to see it undervalued in comparison with other proposals of identity. Therefore, although as a military man, he would have been forced to obey an order from a superior, a noble officer remained convinced that who had given the order would have known well that "this profession is not done if not for honor".⁴⁹ Sometimes, the words became

⁴⁷ Domenico Taccone Gallucci: *Monografia della Patriarcale Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore*, Grottaferrata: Tip. San Nilo, 1911: 134 (in Italian). It was Alexandra Herz who thought that the imperial army was represented in that relief sculpture. See *The Sixtine and Pauline tombs in Sta. Maria Maggiore: an iconographical study*, New York Univ., Phil. Diss., Juni 1974 (Ann Arbor: Xerox Microfilm, 1975), pp. 259–260 and ill. no. 131.

⁴⁸ See the letter of Carlo Bolognetti to Bartolomeo Cesi, in the State Archive of Rome, *Camerale II, Epistolario*, 14, fols. not numbered (in Italian).

⁴⁹ See the letter of Giovan Battista Gottifredi to Tarquinio Capizucchi, March 23, 1625, in the Vatican Apostolic Library, *Barb. lat.*, 9390, fol. 126v (in Italian).

facts: in 1597 and in 1601, the experienced high officer Mario Farnese refused to enlist, in order not to submit to other officers, whom he considered inferior in social rank. Again, in 1601, three colonels stemmed from ancient feudal families, namely Baglioni, Malatesta and Savelli, left active war service only because the captain general Gian Francesco Aldobrandini had died and they did not want to obey to Flaminio Delfini, a roman patrician that was appointed lieutenant general. The papal secretary tried to intervene, by highlighting how they “had violated their duty of being good vassals of His Holiness and of the Holy See”,⁵⁰ but it obtained no results.

Clear as it is that papal military institution could not actually get the objective of a complete professionalization of the aristocracy involved in the army, it must be noticed that that some noble military officers preferred to specialize in the pope’s service and that they made this an instrument for reinforcing their own self-concept. In these cases, being an officer in the papal army was stated as a means of distinction, mainly against other aristocrats. For example, the Ferrarese marquis Luigi Zerbinati claimed the respect he thought he deserved compared to other nobles, namely those from Bologna, because of the long service he had performed for the Holy See, with the charge of Master of Field in the Marca.⁵¹ So, in his actual identity, i.e., according to his self-awareness in the specific context of interaction, being a papal military officer had given him a social status equivalent to that of the exclusive aristocracy of the second city in relevance after Rome.

It appears more difficult to get into common soldiers’ identitarian negotiations. The roman archives do not help. As it happened in other early modern States, the military institutions did not keep personal files; the company was the basic unit for administrative purpose: its list enumerated the common soldiers engaged in service and gave some description about them, with their name, age, place of origin. In case of companies of the territorial militia, the company lists might include also their current or past occupation. Sources like these, however and obviously, do not offer anything about the self-presentation of soldiers. It was only in the 17th century that documents written by common soldiers sprang out. In 1612, the illiterate sergeant Moricanti from Montenuovo, in the Marche, ordered the writing of a petition addressed to the Pope. Asking for the rank of ensign

⁵⁰ See the letter of the cardinal nephew Pietro Aldobrandini, to Giovan Paolo Baglioni, in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Fondo Borghese*, I, 90–91, October 1601, fol. 166v (in Italian). See also G. Brunelli: *Soldiers of the Pope*, *op.cit.*: 148–149 (in Italian).

⁵¹ See the letter of Marquis Luigi Zerbinati to the cardinal Maffeo Barberini (later Pope Urban VIII), February 14, 1614, in the Vatican Apostolic Library, *Barb. lat.* 9412, fol. 1r–v.

bearer, he claimed he had served for thirty years in the papal army, joining the territorial militia, fighting three times against the Turks between 1595 and 1601 and being ready to invade the Duchy of Ferrara in 1597. This was well-known, “not only in Montenuovo, but also to every soldier of the Marca”. If he did not obtain that rank, it would mean that “favours and wealth in peacetime were more important than bravery in wartime”.⁵²

Many other memorials and petitions like this were addressed to the Army Commission, an office instituted around 1640 in order to coordinate papal armed forces, or to the captain general of the Church, namely the head of the military organization. So, for the years 1663–1665 a rich collection of documents is available, which can be studied through a quantitative method.⁵³ At first sight, it appears that soldiers, of which about two thirds were able to write their name, frequently asked for the respect of privileges and tax exemptions if militiamen, and for career advancements if professional ones; they might also petition the high command together, by companies, showing something which looked like a developing esprit de corps. But let's examine some case. A militiaman from Capranica, near Viterbo, claiming not to want to assume an office in the municipal government, wondered if he “must enjoy the privileges granted to him, having always been a soldier”.⁵⁴ A cuirassier from Terni, in Umbria, protesting for having been arrested because he was bearing arms, wrote that he “had always done all the activities fitting to a good soldier”.⁵⁵ Also militiamen from Staffolo, near Ancona (in the Marche region), complained about the lack of observance of the military privileges: they had to recall that they had been “ready both in summer and in winter to rush to the shore, in order to defend it from the Turks [and] to give their blood to protect the Ecclesiastical State”.⁵⁶ It is unnecessary to add more examples. It seems evident that identitarian forms proposed by the military legislation to militiamen, which implied their enjoyment of privileges, immunities and tax exemptions, had been effectively internalized: hence, if forced, those which were enlisted in the territorial militia turned to the high command or directly addressed the captain general, namely “the sole interpreter of privileges and unique chief and protector

⁵² See the Archive of the State of Rome, *Archivio Giustiniani, Armadio Unico Savelli*, vol. 101, fols. not numbered (in Italian).

⁵³ See Vatican Secret Archive, *Commissariato delle armi*, files 47, 56, 59, 67, 74 (in Italian).

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*: 67, fol. 3r (in Italian).

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*: fol. 99r (in Italian).

⁵⁶ See Vatican Secret Archive, *Commissariato delle armi*, 47, fol. 569r (in Italian).

of officers and soldiers”.⁵⁷ Even the cardinal nephew, a sort of Prime Minister of the Ecclesiastical State, could spend his words to recommend soldiers. Scipione Borghese, Pope Paul V’s nephew, did it in favor of two common soldiers from the garrison of Ferrara, as Irene Fosi noted in her paper about petitions and supplications in 17th century Rome.⁵⁸

Yet the sources may attest a difficult coexistence between different identities, still confusedly superimposed. Like many others, a militiaman from Perugia remonstrated about the scarce consideration given to his immunities and exemptions, having been forced to carry firewood for the Commune without any payment. It was a clear case of lack of respect for the military legislation, but for him, as he wrote in the same petition, this was the point: he was a farm worker and a poor peasant, and always had to endure oppression (“aggravij”, in Italian). So, although he was writing in order to see granted his militia privileges, his self-presentation did not resemble that of a military.⁵⁹ Even professional soldiers sometimes confused their actual occupation with a common work. A cavalryman, immediately after his first review, asked his captain for permission “to return at work in his grocery, because food was perishing and he had to pay the rent”; a similar request was made by an infantryman from Priverno, who presented himself as a “poor man, responsible of his family, who had a barber’s shop”.⁶⁰

The judiciary archives also contain sources for the aim of this paper. The procedure and the praxis of the Pope’s military justice are not well known yet. Trials might have begun by the initiative of the high command of the army or directly by the Court of the Governor of Rome. Usually, it was the latter who proceeded to sentence. Sure, it was not easy to subject soldiers to a detention or to an examination. Civilians frequently alleged having been damaged by military people, but soldiers were rarely identified and arrested. Anyway, the depositions which emerge from the few criminal trials known at the present state of research,

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*: fol. 67r (in Italian).

⁵⁸ See I. Fosi: ‘Rituals of Words. Petitioning, pleading, recommending himself in Rome in the Seicento’, in: C. Nubola & A. Würzler (eds.): *Forme della comunicazione politica in Europa nei secoli 15.–18.: suppliche, gravamina, lettere*, Bologna & Berlin: Il Mulino & Duncker & Humblot, 2004: 329–349, p. 335 in particular.

⁵⁹ See the petition attached to the letter of mons. Fabrizio Verospi to Carlo Barberini, January 9, 1624, in the Vatican Apostolic Library, *Barb. lat.* 9116, fol. 14r.

⁶⁰ See the *Information* about the oppressions suffered by the soldiers of the Campagna et Maritima from their captains and from other officers in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Segr. Stato, Soldati*, 29, quotations from fols. 25r and 116r (in Italian).

comprehended expressions of a developing identity, which did not correspond so much to the identitarian forms proposed by the institutions. First, it must be noticed that men not only from the Ecclesiastical State but also from other Italian and European States were usually enlisted. We are not speaking about Albanian or Corsican soldiers, in the service of the Popes since the last quarter of the 16th century: these last operated in entire companies under the command of their officers, enlisted from the mercenaries' market, because of their presumed skill in maintaining the public order. We are talking about men from the Kingdom of Naples, from the Duchies of Northern Italy, even from Spain, who chose to serve for a while in the papal army. They called each other by nickname: "the Red-haired from Albano", or "the Forelock" or "the Crippled Priest from Ascoli", who probably was a real priest: with names like that, no one could expect that some of them could be exemplary soldiers of the Pope.⁶¹

Also the reasons for having joined the army may have been absolutely inconsistent. "Your Lordship knows about young men, which like to see new places, I cannot tell you other reasons why I enlisted": this was the only explanation given by a common soldier from the garrison of Ferrara to the question "Why did you enlist?".⁶² Coherently, asked about whom they were serving, soldiers did not answer referring to the Pope or to the Captain General or to the State of the Church. They simply told to which colonel or captain they obeyed and that was all: not a word about a supposed soldier of the pope identity.⁶³ So, soldiers of an early modern Italian State seem to confirm what 20th century military sociology stated since its debut: in an army, the sense of unit, the esprit de corps, are more important than any ideology. Yet, the consequences of behavior like the one just mentioned could be paradoxical: in 1625 a full company was taken to trial for "offensio vexilli", namely flag offenses. In fact, returning to their quarters after a parade, "some soldiers, without maintaining the decorum owned to the insignia while accompanying it, beat windows and balconies with their spears and threw down pots from the windows".⁶⁴ An officer tried to stop such an insult by rebuk-

⁶¹ See the two trials in the Archive of State of Rome, *Tribunale Criminale del Governatore, Processi, 17th century*, vol. 201, fols. 2r–20v (1625) and vol. 205, folr. 1r–8v (1625). In Italian.

⁶² The deposition is in the Vatican Secret Archive, *Segr. Stato, Ferrara*, 359, fols. 1r–610v, f. 129r in particular (in Italian).

⁶³ See the records of the trials (in Italian) in the Archive of State of Rome, *Tribunale criminale del governatore, Processi, 16th century*, 298, file 1, fols. 19r–30v (1595); *ibid.: Processi, 17th century*, 201, fols. 2r–20v (1625).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: fol. 14r in particular (in Italian).

ing them, but the result was even worse: as an act of defiance, a soldier hit the insignia, which carried the symbol for St. Peter, the crossed keys.

Only at the moment of presenting their alibi to investigators, soldiers remembered the identitarian forms proposed by the institution. One of those from the garrison of Castel Sant'Angelo, confident that he could be believed, affirmed that "in the morning I left home and I went by the Castel, holding my rosary beads".⁶⁵ A Corsican soldier, not afraid of making an embarrassing blunder, told the judges this uplifting story about his day-time:

Yesterday I did the Four Churches devotion, namely Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint John Lateran and Saint Mary Major, because this morning I wished to take holy communion and to climb the Holy Stairs.⁶⁶

The soldier's words impress upon the reader a picture of pious man, a real soldier of the Pope, as it was drawn between the 16th and the 17th century. Nothing more fake than that. Browsing the entire file of the trial proceedings, this soldier – a Corsican one – seems to have been guilty of the crime he was accused of. Nonetheless, falsehood and truth do not matter in this case. For our purpose, it is more relevant to assert the effectiveness of the new model of a soldier of the pope in the first half of the 17th century. The soldier accused by the Governor of Rome believed that his strategy of defense would have succeeded if he had shaped his self-identity by the models proposed by the papal military institution.

So, he probably said what he thought the judges wanted to hear.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *Processi, 16th century*, 48, fols. 11r–12r, 11r–2r in particular (in Italian).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: *Processi, 17th century*, 200, fols. 449r–476r, fol. 453r in particular (in Italian).

