

Flags of Friuli-Venezia Giulia

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ABSTRACT: Placed in the extreme north-east of Italy, the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the five so-called *autonomous regions* of the Italian Republic. The territory presently within the borders of the region had in the past been subjected to many different powers: the German Empire, the Republic of Venice, Austria-Hungary, the France of Napoleon, and the Kingdom of Italy. For a long time the territory had been divided between several States and cultural differences are still evident. This paper describes some of the flags which have flown over the territory in the past, the present regional flag and some provincial and civic flags.

The illustrations for this paper appear on Plates 42-47.

1 Introduction

The autonomous region *Friuli-Venezia Giulia* is situated in the extreme north-east of Italy (Fig. 1); it has a roughly square shape and borders on the Republic of Austria to the north, the Republic of Slovenia to the east, the Veneto Region to the west and the Adriatic Sea to the south. As the name suggests, its territory comprises the union of Friuli with the small part of Venezia Giulia now remaining under Italian rule. Friuli and Venezia Giulia are each made up of two Provinces: the former comprising Udine and Pordenone, the latter Gorizia and Trieste, even if part of the Province of Gorizia can be considered to belong to Friuli. Gorizia and Trieste are among the smallest Italian Provinces. Before the Second World War, Venezia Giulia also comprised the Provinces of Pola (Pula), Zara (Zadar) and Fiume (Rjeka)¹ and, for a short time after the Italian occupation of southern Carniola (Slovenia) in 1941, the newly created Province of Lubiana (Ljubljana).

2 Historical notes

The land presently within the regional borders belonged, during the Roman age, to the *Decima Regio* (Tenth Region) *Venetia et Histria*, which had Aquileia as its capital from the time of Caesar Augustus. This town, founded in 181 BC, was among the most populated of Italy and its harbour, seat of the northern Adriatic fleet, was the most important in the eastern regions. Surrounded by rich agricultural land, the town was a centre of industrial, commercial and maritime activities. From Aquileia Christianity began to spread to the west and in the 3rd century Aquileia had its own bishop.

Later, Aquileia found itself on the road of barbaric invaders and in the centre of the struggles for domination of the Empire. In 452 the town was besieged and plundered by Attila. All these terrible events led the city to organise itself around the Christian Church which rapidly increased its importance, becoming the centre of a wide ecclesiastical metropolis. During the so-called schism of the *Three Chapters* (559-699) the Aquileian bishop adopted for himself the title of *patriarch*.

¹ In 568 Friuli was conquered by the Longobards who established themselves in Cividale (Forum Julii) where they created their first Duchy; the Duchy of Friuli. Only a narrow strip of land near the sea, including the island of Grado where the patriarch fled, the Venetian coast, Istria and Dalmatia remained under the dominion of Byzantium.

The Longobard Kingdom survived until 776 when it was conquered by the Franks, who introduced feudalism. After the Carolingian age, Friuli was united by Otto I to the Duchy of Bavaria and Carinthia, thus falling under German influence. The terrible Hungarian invasions, that repeatedly took place between 899 and 952, cast the land in a state of deep turmoil. As a consequence of these sad events, the prestige of the patriarchs began to grow extensively, standing out as the only moral power able to make those lands rise again after their destruction. Thus, in addition to spiritual powers, they also acquired secular power, placing them side by side with the other counts and dukes of the Empire. The first known flags and arms date back to this time. The flag of the Patriarchate, which corresponded to its arms, bore a golden eagle armed in red on a light blue field² (Fig. 2). The war flag was red with a white bishop's mitre in the middle with two crossed pastorals behind³ (Fig. 3). The Patriarchate of Aquileia, the capital of which was later moved to Cividale, Cormóns and then to Udine, was, at the time, the most powerful theocratic State after the Church State.

The eastern territories, along the shores of the Isonzo river, were dominions of the counts of Gorizia, vassals of the Empire. From the 12th century to 1500 they ruled over a territory which, at its greatest extent, included Gorizia, the eastern coast of Istria, Carinthia, and the whole Tyrol. They were also vassals of the patriarch of Aquileia for some places in Friuli (Sedegliano, San Lorenzo, Latisana, Castelnuovo, Mortegliano, Codroipo). The original arms of the counts were blue with a golden lion⁴; after the acquisition of the Friulan feuds (1226)

the shield of arms was diagonally divided adding red and white bands to the previous design. Red and white were the colours of the vassal flag by which the counts were enfeoffed by the patriarch.⁵ A seal of count Mainard III shows a rider holding a banner of the arms (Fig. 4). Other flags, like the one represented on the marble slab of the last count Leonard (Fig. 5), had the arms on a plain field (probably white). In the year 1500 the County of Gorizia passed to the Hapsburgs and later become an Austrian Province (Land). For a short time (1647–1717) the small but militarily important fortress of Gradisca had been raised to a separate County under the sovereignty of the counts of Eggenberg. Following the German habit of displaying *Landesfarben*, the colours⁶ for this Province were yellow, blue and white (Fig. 6).⁷ For the County of Gorizia the colours red, yellow and blue are recorded,⁸ later modified, when the *Princely County of Gorizia and Gradisca* was created, to yellow and blue⁹ (Figs 7, 8).

Trieste existed for centuries as a semi-independent town, continually threatened by the regular assaults of the Venetians. Tired of being in the middle of the struggle between them and the Patriarch, the inhabitants gave the town to the Hapsburgs in the year 1382 in exchange for protection. The old traditional flag of Trieste was probably very similar to the present one: a white "halberd"¹⁰ on a red field (Fig. 9).

The Patriarchate was conquered by Venice in 1420 and from the 17th century new arms were introduced for the *Fatherland of Friuli* (Patria del Friuli). These represented a woman with a mural crown holding a book and a lance¹¹ (Fig. 10), no flags other than those of Venice are known to have flown over the territory (Fig. 11). Under the dominion of Venice, Friuli retained a great deal of autonomy, being a "Region with special statutes." After the defeat in 1797 of the Venetians by the French army led by General Bernadotte, Friuli was annexed to the Austrian Empire. In fact, following the peace treaty signed in Campoformido, all of Friuli, including a large part of the Venetian territories, was ceded to Austria in exchange for Lombardy and the Netherlands, acquired by France. Under Austrian rule Friuli was included in the new formed Veneto Province, losing its old statutes and administrative autonomy.

A few years later, in 1809, Veneto, Friuli, Gorizia, and Istria were once again invaded, this time by Napoleon, who divided these lands between the *Italian Kingdom* and the *Illyrian Provinces* of the French Empire, which also comprised Carniola, Carinthia, Dalmatia, Croatia, and Ragusa, with Lubiana as chief town. Illyrian Provinces were organized on the model of French departments, they did not have any particular flag beyond the "tricolour." There was indeed a Duke of Friuli (Michael von Duroc) with a personal coat of arms (Fig. 12) but he was never sovereign of this territory.

The fall of Napoleon brought Friuli, along with Veneto and Lombardy, back under Austrian rule in the new *Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia*. Part of the territories of the former Illyrian Provinces (Carinthia, Carniola and the *Küstenland*, which comprised Gorizia and Gradisca, Trieste and Istria) became the *Kingdom of Illyria*, established in 1816. The *Flaggen Almanach*¹² shows a flag assigned

to Illyria (Fig. 13); white over red with the Austrian shield in the middle.¹³ This administrative arrangement never really worked and it disappeared in 1848. The territory of Tarvisio belonged to the Duchy of Carinthia.

During the Hapsburg dominion the old golden eagle on blue was resumed for Friuli (Fig. 15), and remained in use until its annexation to the Kingdom of Italy in the year 1866, when Friuli was incorporated into the *Venezia-Euganea* Region. The eastern parts, Gorizia and Gradisca, Trieste and Istria, remained under Austria-Hungary until 1918. As Austrian *Länder* they had their own *Landesfarben* and coat of arms.¹⁴ The colours of the Princely Counties of Gorizia and Gradisca were, from about 1886, white over red¹⁵ (Fig. 16) and the coat of arms vertically divided, with the arms of Gorizia on the right and those of Gradisca on the left (Fig. 17). In the latter, the cross-on-crescent device had often been represented as an anchor-shaped cross or even an anchor, misrepresenting the original design. Trieste used the red-white-red colours of Austria (Fig. 18), to which the civic flag added the civic arms (Fig. 19): per fess, in chief the black double-headed eagle on gold, and in base three horizontal bands red-silver-red with a golden halberd in the middle.¹⁶ The arms of Istria were: blue a yellow goat with red horns over a green hill; the colours were yellow, red, and blue.

After the collapse of the Austrian Empire following the First World War, the territory was divided between the Kingdoms of Italy and Yugoslavia. Gorizia, Trieste, and Istria were united to form the new Region *Venezia Giulia*, while Friuli remained incorporated into *Venezia Euganea*.

After the Second World War the greater part of *Venezia Giulia* was assigned to the Yugoslavian Federation, which divided it between the Socialist Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, while Trieste should have become an autonomous State: the *Free Territory of Trieste*. However, before the creation of this new State, the territory was divided in two parts, of which one (A Zone) was under Allied control and the other (B Zone) was under Yugoslav control. The flag of the A Zone was the civic flag of Trieste, adopted after its annexation to Italy in 1918: red with a white halberd (Fig. 20), corresponding to the civic arms. In 1954 the administration of the A Zone was transferred to Italy and, after the Osimo treaty of 1975, the two Republics officially agreed on the borders between them.

In 1947 the new Region *Friuli-Venezia Giulia* was created and in 1964 its special status of autonomous Region was recognised, with its capital in Trieste.

3 The regional flag

The Region has its own flag; light blue with a golden eagle with wings displayed holding in its claws a silver towered bastion (Fig. 21). This flag is quite widely displayed both by public institutions as well as by private citizens. It is also raised, together with the Italian flag, at some border points as, for example, that between Italy and Austria at Tarvisio. Its use began in 1967, following the

adoption of the regional arms (from which the flag derives) and the gonfalon.

4 Provincial flags

The Region is divided into four Provinces: Trieste, Udine, Gorizia, and Pordenone. Of these only the Province of *Udine* has an official flag (Fig. 22), the colours of which come directly from those of the old Patriarchate flag. The flag is vertically divided in two equal parts, blue (next to the hoist) and yellow; sometimes the golden eagle from the provincial arms (Fig. 23) is placed in the middle, but this is not the official version adopted around 1970.

The Province of *Gorizia* adopted its arms and gonfalon in 1929. The arms are those of the old County of Gorizia: per bend, the first blue with a golden lion, the second with six silver and red bars. The province has no official flag; sometimes a blue and yellow flag with the arms in the middle (Fig. 24) is used. This design corresponds with that of the gonfalon.

The arms of the Province of *Pordenone* are: on blue the goddess of Concordia carrying in her left arm a gold cornucopia replete with fruits while in her right hand she holds an olive branch, all proper. Below the shield, on a blue cartouche, the Latin motto: *Concordia parvae res crescunt* (Fig. 25). Pordenone is the youngest Province of the region, having been created in 1969. The provincial arms were adopted on 30 April 1976.

All three of these contiguous Provinces have gonfalons of the same design: blue and yellow vertical stripes with the respective coat of arms in the centre. These choices are intended to recall ancient connections to the patriarchal State even if, in the case of Gorizia, the colours are those of a State to which most of it, including the capital, never belonged.

The last Province to consider is that of *Trieste*. The arms, adopted on 22 September 1927, derive from a seal of the town going back to the 14th century and are: blue with a two-towered silver Roman vallum over a three-peaked green mountain and a blue sea with silver waves. The vallum is surmounted by a silver halberd (Fig. 26). The gonfalon is blue with the arms in the middle.

5 Civic flags

The display of civic flags and colours is not very common in Italy and Friuli-Venezia Giulia is no exception. There are however many civic flags, often unknown to the citizens and even to the administrators themselves. The only widely displayed flags are those connected with local football teams that sometimes wear the civic colours (e.g. Udinese, Pro Gorizia and Triestina). A common practice is the use of the civic flag during the meetings of the civic parliaments, sometimes together with the Italian and/or the regional flag.

Trieste is the regional capital. Its flag is red with a white halberd (Fig. 20).

Udine, the principal town of Friuli, has a flag that probably goes back to the 14th century; vertically divided, black near the hoist and white¹⁷ in the fly (Fig. 27). The flag is derived from the arms, silver with a black chevron, which can be seen in the middle of a white flag on a 15th–16th century fresco in the archbishop's palace (Fig. 28). The first representation of the arms date back to 1261. In recent times the civic administration has used this flag charged with a shield of the arms in the centre.

Gorizia has a blue flag with the arms in the middle¹⁸ (Fig. 29). The blue is a very common background colour for Italian civic flags and in the case of Gorizia it represents the water of the Isonzo river. This colour also comes from the arms: blue with a silver wall on green champagne. A flag used after the annexation to Italy in 1918 bore a round seal with the castle (Fig. 30); it can be seen in a picture taken during the ceremony to award the gold medal to the town. Another flag, conserved before the Second World War at the *Museum of the War and Risorgimento*, and now probably lost, was white over light blue with the arms in the middle (Fig. 31). I presume this flag was used under the Austrian government.

Pordenone has as its flag a vertical red-white-red tri-colour (Fig. 32)¹⁹; the colours come from those of the Hapsburgs. A civic flag proposed in 1936 was exactly as the Austrian one with the arms in the centre of the white stripe (Fig. 33).

Aquileia, a powerful old town, has a flag recalling that of the ancient Patriarchate: blue with a golden eagle (Fig. 34).

Cividale has a horizontally divided flag of red over white (Fig. 35). The ancient middle-age flag of Cividale was a red-white-red armorial banner. It is possible that the ancient flag was discontinued to avoid confusion with the Austrian flag.

Gemona has a very old flag dating back to the 15th century. The flag is vertically divided blue near the hoist and red in the fly (Fig. 36). This flag is not derived from the arms, which are indeed per fess gold and red. Originally the arms of the community were silver over red while the arms of the town were blue and silver. It seems²⁰ that the fusion between the two arms through the common metal gave origin to the flag. In 1846 Austria changed the silver of the shield to gold and so it has remained until today on the civic arms.

Gradisca's flag, adopted in 1939, is horizontally divided yellow over blue, in the middle a white crescent turned upward surmounted by a cross (Fig. 37). The colours recall the Patriarchate while the device, often confused with an anchor, stands for the victory of the Christianity over the Islam.

Grado has a red flag on which is depicted a white tower masoned in red surmounted by a golden mural crown (Fig. 38).

Monfalcone is an important ship-building town. The flag is blue with the arms in the middle (Fig. 39).

Turriaco is a small village where the author lives. The flag is vertically divided white and blue, with the civic arms on a white disk in the centre (Fig. 40).

Notes and references

1. Until 1924 Fiume constituted a small independent State; see A. Ziggio, *Fiume, Vexilla Italica* V, I (1978).
2. A testimonial of the existence of such a flag is an extract from an inventory of the commune of Gemona where it is cited "1439 Unum vexillum cum aquila zali coloris"; one small flag with this design was sewn on the funeral dress of patriarch Bertrand and is now conserved at the Church museum in Udine. See also A. Ziggio, *Vexilla Italica* IV, 2-3, p. 21 (1977).
3. Manin, O., *Memorie e notizie*, manuscript conserved at the Udine Civic Library (ms. 619/1), XVIII century.
4. Fabretto, M., *Simboli e bandiere della Contea di Gorizia, XII - XVI sec., Vexilla Italica* XVII, 1 (1995).
5. De Rubeis, B.M., *Monumenta Ecclesiae Aquileiensis* (1748).
6. Pasch, G., *Table de détermination des drapeaux. Détermination des sections*. Report of the IV ICV, Turin (1976).
7. These were the colours of the coat of arms, which was the same as the present-day civic arms of Gradisca d'Isonzo: gold over blue with a silver device in the middle composed by a cross over a tilted crescent, symbolizing the victory of Christianity over the Islam.
8. Philippe, L., personal communication.
9. From a table published by the Austrian Ministry for Education (1878) and A. Grenser, *National- und Landesfarben von 150 Staaten*, Frankfurt am Main (1881). Information from L. Philippe.
10. This device should be a "corsesca" but it is commonly accepted to be a halberd, so we will use this familiar term.
11. del Torso, E., *Patria del Friuli, Araldica Civica del Friuli*, Udine (1978).
12. *Flaggen Almanach: Flaggen mit Guidons, Cornetten und Wimpeln in alphabetischer Ordnung nebst den Cocarden aller Nationen*, Hamburg, Deppermann & Ruschke (c.1845).

13. The arms of the Kingdom were blue, a golden ship (Fig. 14).
14. *Die See-Flaggen, National- und Provinzial-Fahnen sowie Cocarden aller Länder nach offiziellen Quellen zusammengestellt und bearbeitet von F. Heyer v. Rosenfeld*, Wien, Druck und Verlag der K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1883.
15. The colours could have derived from the old arms of the town of Gorizia, red, a silver castle, but, as we said before, white and red were also the colours which represented the counts possession in Friuli. It is interesting to note that white and red were also the colours of the County of Tyrol, ruled by the same family, until 15th century.
16. Ziggio, A., *Trieste, Vexilla Italica* IV, 2-3 (1977).
17. Ziggio, A., *Udine, Vexilla Italica* IV, 2-3 (1977).
18. Ziggio, A., *Gorizia, Vexilla Italica* IV, 1 (1977).
19. Ziggio, A., *Pordenone, Vexilla Italica* IV, 2-3 (1977).
20. Mor, C.G., *Problematica storica dell'araldica civica in Friuli, Araldica Civica del Friuli*, Udine (1978).

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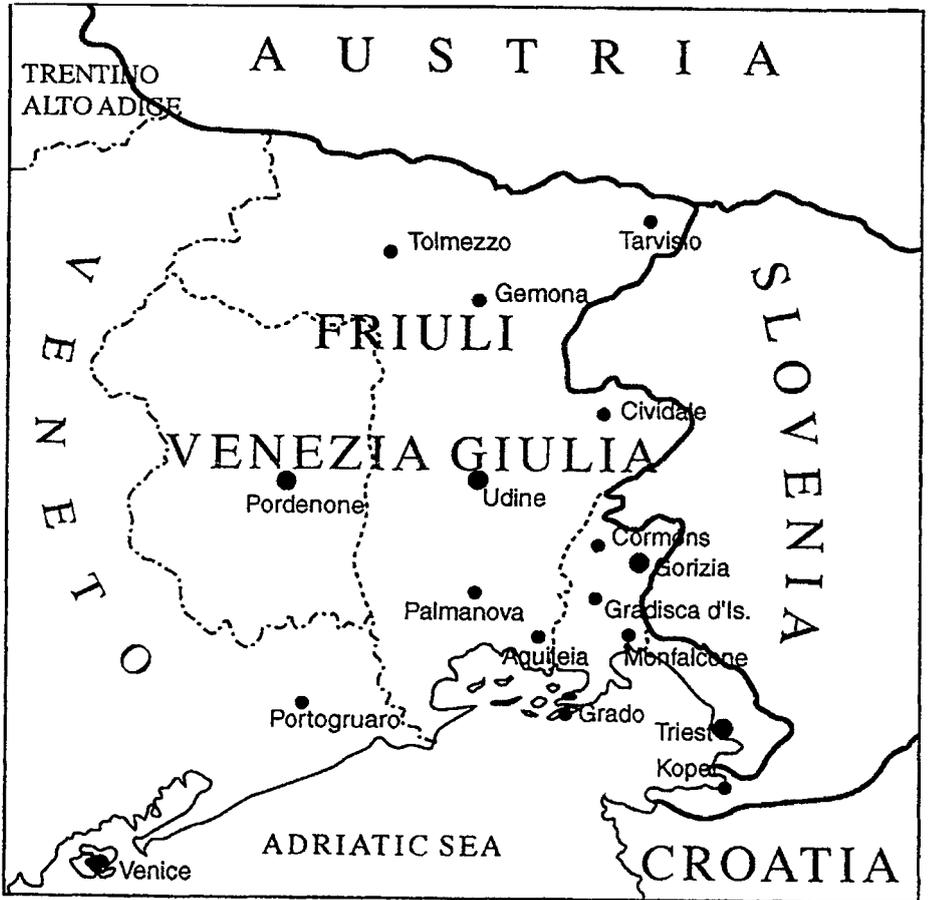
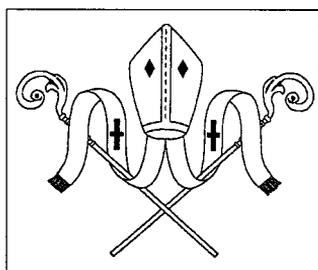


FIGURE 1



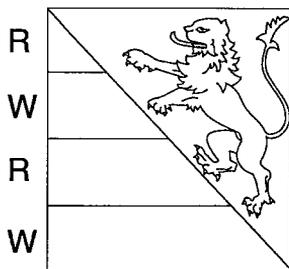
Y,R/B

Figure 2



W/R

Figure 3



R
W
R
W

Figure 4

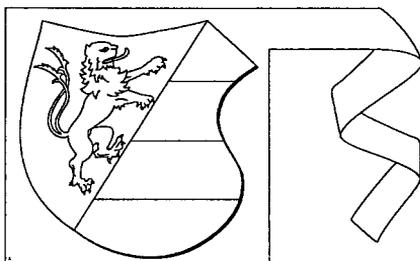
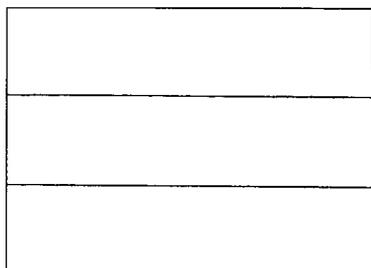
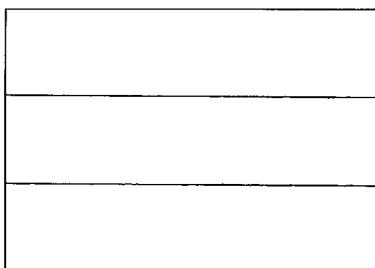


Figure 5



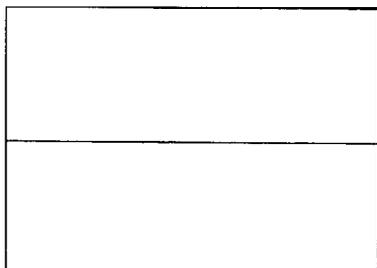
Y
B
W

Figure 6



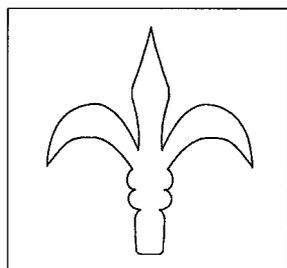
R
Y
B

Figure 7



B
Y

Figure 8



W/R

Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

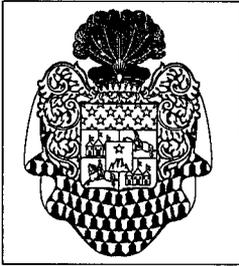


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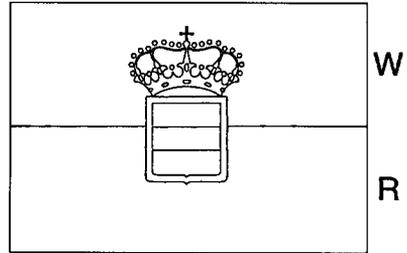


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

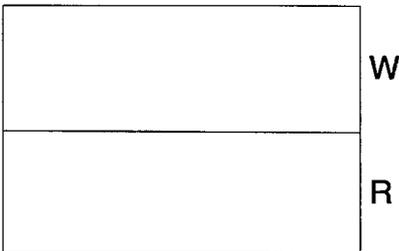


Figure 16

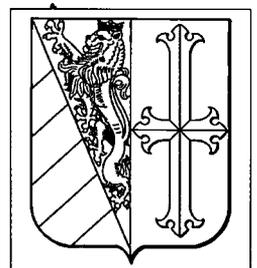


Figure 17

Plate 45

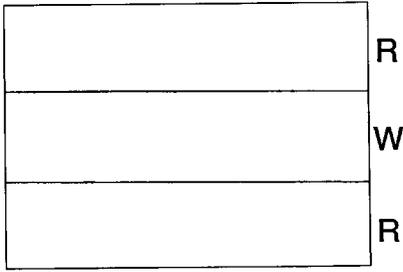


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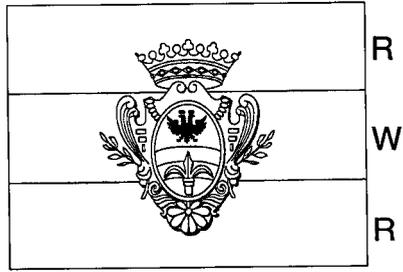


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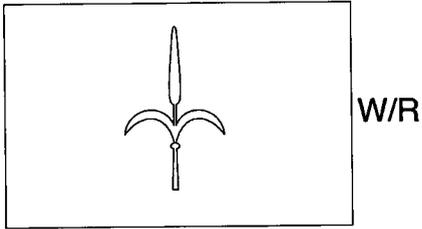


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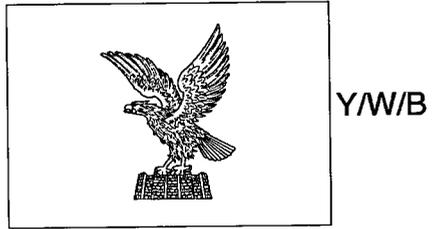


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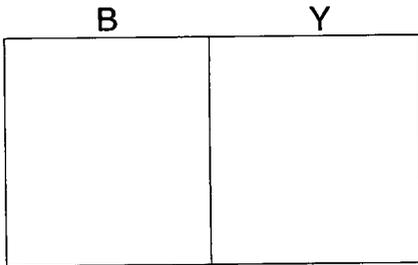


Figure 22



Figure 23

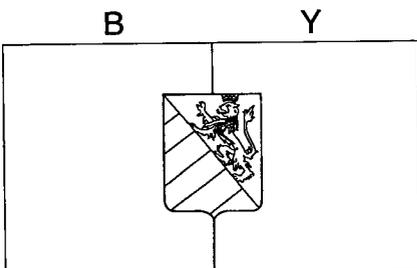


Figure 24



Figure 25

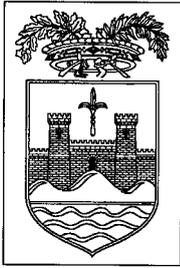


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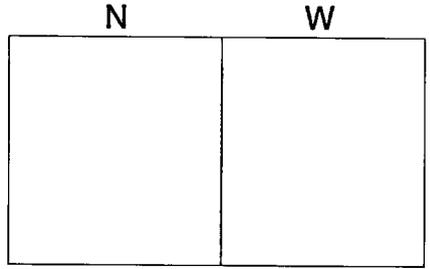


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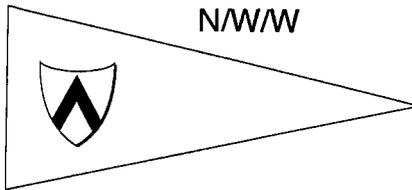


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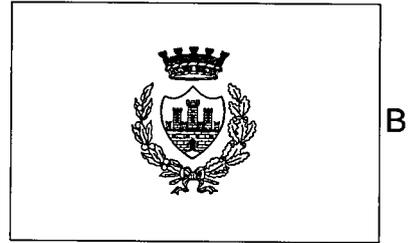


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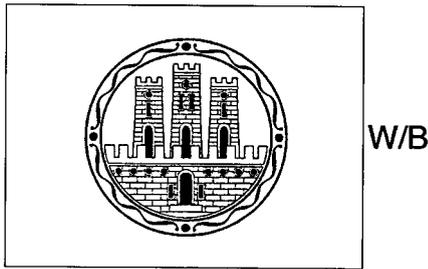


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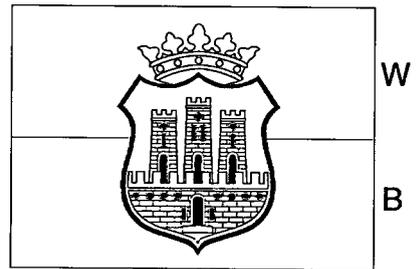


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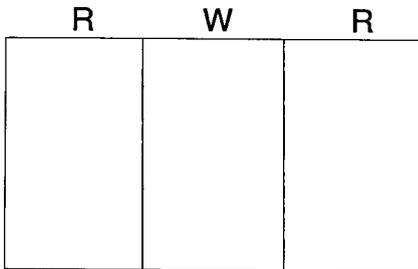


Figure 32



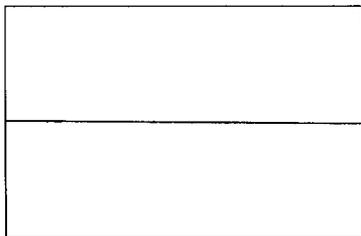
Figure 33

Plate 47



Y/B

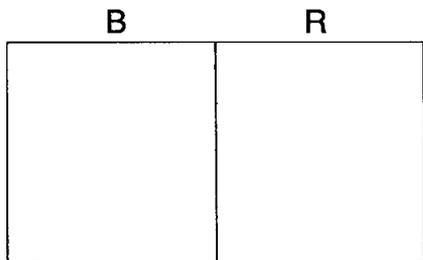
Figure 34



R

W

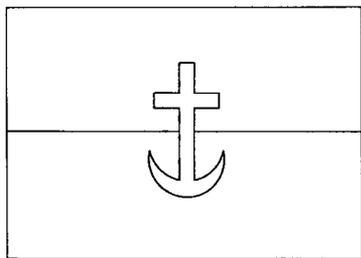
Figure 35



B

R

Figure 36

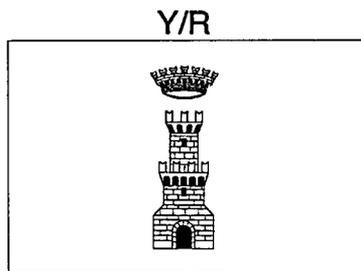


Y

W

B-

Figure 37



Y/R

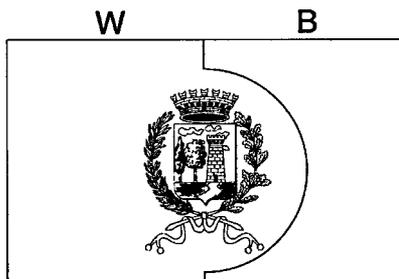
W/R

Figure 38



B

Figure 39



W

B

Figure 40