# The Friulian Language

# The Friulian Language: Identity, Migration, Culture

Edited by

Rosa Mucignat

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All translations from Friulian into English are mine, and any mistakes are my sole responsibility.

# INTRODUCTION

# FRIULI: A SMALL HOMELAND IN THE AGE OF TRANSNATIONALISM

ROSA MUCIGNAT

Ora, in un paese tra il mare e la montagna,
dove scoppiano grandi temporali, d'inverno piove molto,
in Febbraio si vedono le montagne chiare come il vetro,
appena al di là dei rami umidi, e poi nascono le primule sui fossi inodore...
(Pasolini, "Poeta delle Ceneri")

Are dialects the lifeblood of cherished local identities or just passports with restricted validity, serving no purpose in today's transnational, global world? In Italy, where there are twelve officially recognized minority languages (the highest number in Western Europe) and where dialects are still extraordinarily vital, the question is not a trivial one.[1] The north-eastern region of Friuli is a case in point: in this area, a Romance language of the Rhaeto-Romance family is spoken, variously referred to as *furlan*, *lenghe furlane* or *marilenghe* (It. friulano, Eng. Friulian), which is attested to in written texts since 1150, and has been in literary use since the

[1] The twelve officially recognized languages are: Albanian (100,000 speakers), Catalan (18,000 speakers), Croatian (1,700 speakers), Franco-Provençal (70,000 speakers), French (120,000 speakers), Friulian (526,000 speakers), German (295,000 speakers), Greek (3,900 speakers), Ladin (28,000 speakers), Occitan (50,000 speakers), Sardinian (175,000 speakers), Slovene (85,000 speakers). All languages are identified and protected by national Law 482/1999 "Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche" (Laws governing the protection of historical linguistic minorities), adopted on 15 December 1999 and published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica italiana* n. 297 on 20 December 1999.

fourteenth century.[2] Figures for Friulian speakers vary between 430,000 and 625,000, depending on whether occasional speakers and Friulanophones residing outside Friuli are included in the estimate or not.[3] Tucked away in the far eastern corner of the Italian peninsula, for long periods of its history Friuli has remained cut off from the rest of Northern Italy, as a semi-independent state surrounded by the stronger powers of Venice and both the German and, later, Austro-Hungarian Empires. The particular history and geographical position of the region have shielded Friulian from the influence of the neighbouring Italian, Germanic and Slavic varieties, thus preserving it substantially intact. This phenomenon has helped to form a strong awareness in Friulian speakers that the language they use is quite distinct from both standard Italian and other dialects such as Venetian.[4] Being geographically remote from the centre of the nation in Rome, the population of Friuli has historically tended to see Italy as far more distant than the neighbouring countries in the Alps, and since 1963 has obtained a relatively high degree of administrative and political autonomy from the central state. The idea of Friuli as a "piccola patria" (small homeland), as it is often affectionately called, largely owes its resilience to this deeply-felt sense of linguistic identity which, in recent years, has sustained a successful campaign for the protection of Friulian as a minority language, culminating with the introduction of Friulian language teaching in the school curriculum in 2007.

The region is bounded to the south by the Adriatic coastline. A fertile plain extends north and east towards the Carnic and Julian Alps, and is cut in two by the river Tagliamento, which runs north to south dividing the province of Pordenone to the west from that of Udine to the east. The Alpine range encloses the plain, forming a dramatic backdrop to the undulating landscape of the wine country and, further south, to the intensively cultivated and industrial lowlands rolling down to the sea. It should be noted that Friuli today consists of the two provinces of Pordenone and Udine. In 1948, it was united to the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste to form the administrative region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The two geographical components of the region are linguistically heterogeneous (even though a Friulian variety is spoken in a few areas in

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[2] See John Haiman and Paola Benincà, *The Rhaeto-Romance Languages* (London: Routledge, 1992), 14.

[3] The results of the most recent estimate were published by Linda Picco in *Ricerca sulla condizione sociolinguistica del friulano* (Udine: Forum, 2001).

[4] That is, *veneziano* or the dialect of the city of Venice. To avoid confusion, contributors have adopted the term 'Venetan' (*veneto*) to indicate the dialects spoken in the Veneto region and some parts of Friuli.

the province of Gorizia) and have had a very different history: on the one hand, Friuli joined the new-born Italian state in 1866, experiencing intense out-migration towards Northern Europe and the Americas until the late 1950s, when the "economic boom," propelled by remittance flows, drove the rapid development of the region's industrial sector. On the other hand, the sub-region of Venezia Giulia had been a prosperous part of the Habsburg Empire since the sixteenth century, and only joined Italy after the Austrian defeat in 1918; later, the territorial changes after the Second World War and the general slowdown of the international port activities in Trieste caused vast depopulation. While the cultural and historical significance of Venezia Giulia is not in question, this volume will concentrate exclusively on Friuli and on the development of its particular social, linguistic, and literary experience.[5]

I have referred to Friulian as a "minority language," a "language," and also as a "dialect." As the fluctuation in the terminology will continue throughout the book, the meaning of these designations and their applicability to Friulian deserve at least a brief explanation here. A minority language is the language spoken by a group that is numerically smaller than the rest of the population of the state in which it is part, and is different from the official language of that state. This designation has to do with the type of legal recognition that minority groups demand or receive for their language from the state. The distinction between dialect and language, on the other hand, is not based on linguistic facts but on the level of social prestige attached to a given linguistic variety.[6] As an idiom, Friulian has long lead a double, and even a triple life: it is both a dialect, the *marlienghe* (mother tongue) used in daily exchanges in the home and with friends and colleagues, mostly in rural areas; and a language, the *lenghe furlane* (Friulian language) protected by law as a minority language and self-consciously adopted as an artistic medium, especially in poetry. The most well-known examples of literary Friulian are the Baroque verses by Ermes di Colloredo (Colloredo di Monte Albano 1622–Gorizzo, near Codroipo, 1692), who also wrote mock-philosophical dialogues in prose; the sentimental poems of Pietro Zorutti (Lonzano del Collio 1792–Udine 1867), written in the Friulian spoken in the area around Udine, which subsequently acquired the status of literary koinè; the stories of country

[5] For a general account of the region's history from 1800 to the present day see *Storia d'Italia: Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi: Il Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, ed. Roberto Finzi, Claudio Magris and Giovanni Miccoli, 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 2002). On Trieste in particular see Katia Pizzi, *A City in Search of an Author: The Literary Identity of Trieste* (Sheffield: Sheffield UP, 2001).
[6] See R. A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 30-32.

life by Caterina Percoto (San Lorenzo di Soleschiano, Udine 1812–1887); and, in more modern times, Pier Paolo Pasolini's poems and his prose drama in the dialect of Casarsa, which are no doubt the most widely read and translated works in the Friulian language.[7] This double function of Friulian is by no means an isolated case in Italy, where dialects often have a written tradition that is connected to, but does not depend entirely on, their status as mother tongues or "languages of the heart." In fact, for the most part Italy operates in a diglossic situation where, as Giulio Lepschy has noted, the remits of everyday communication and literary expression are not neatly divided between standard Italian and dialects, with authors who are native speakers of Italian, such as Pasolini, often choosing to write in a dialect that is not technically their mother tongue.[8]

There has also been a long tradition of academic study of Friulian and its expressions in literature and folklore. The great linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, who is considered by many to be the father of Italian dialectology, conducted one of the earliest examinations of Friulian as part of his study of the Romance languages spoken in the Alps, which was published in 1873.[9] Two years earlier, Jacopo Pirona had published his *Vocabolario friulano*, which is still a fundamental point of reference for the study of Friulian.[10] The *Società Filologica Friulana* (Friulian Philological Society) was established in 1919 to promote the use and knowledge of Friulian, as well as "la conoscenza delle lingue e delle culture minoritarie, considerate anche quale strumento per l'affermazione della pace nel mondo e della fratellanza tra i popoli" (the study of minority language and cultures, viewed also as an instrument for the achievement of world peace and brotherhood among peoples).[11] The society publishes two periodicals, *Ce fastu?* (on topics of philology and linguistics) and *Sot la nape* (on regional history and traditions), as well as a broad range of literary criticism, art,

[7] For an overview of Friulian literature see two monographs by Rienzo Pellegrini: *Tra lingua e letteratura: Per una storia degli usi scritti del friulano* (Udine: Casamassima, 1987) and *Ancora tra lingua e letteratura: Saggi sparsi sulla storia degli usi scritti del friulano* (Cercivento, Udine: Associazione culturale Cjargne-Culture, 2003).
[8] Giulio Lepschy, "Mother Tongues and Literary Languages," in *Mother Tongues and Other Reflections on the Italian Language* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002), 27.
[9] Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, "Saggi ladini," *Archivio glottologico italiano* 1 (1873): 1-556.
[10] Jacopo Pirona, *Vocabolario friulano* (Venice: Antonelli, 1871).
[11] Art. 1 of the *Statuto della Società Filologica Friulana*, accessed January 8, 2014, http://www.filologicafriulana.it/easynet/Frameset.asp?CODE=SFF&FROMSTART=TRUE.

history, folklore, and works of literature in Friulian. The same fields are also covered by the Udine university press, Forum. Among the news media the journal *Patrie del Friûl*, published monthly since 1978 with an explicit autonomist agenda, reports in Friulian on local politics and culture; Radio Onde Furlane has been broadcasting a full schedule of programmes in Friulian since 1980; and since 1996, Friulian has dedicated air-time on state television and local commercial channels. Bilingual (Italian and Friulian) street signs are now the norm in towns and villages across Friuli, and the six-volume *Grant Dizionari Bilengâl Talian–Furlan* (GDB TF) has been published in 2011, which, in a rare reversal of power between minor and major languages uses Friulian, and not Italian, as the lexicographic metalanguage. Despite these efforts, however, Friulian is ranked by UNESCO as a "definitely endangered" language, indicating that "children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home."[12]

Simultaneously secluded and integrated, peripheral and central, Friuli has a distinctive culture and character. Friulians are stereotypically represented as simple, hard-working country and mountain people with a stern, reserved temperament, which can eventually ease off into warm-hearted sociability and conviviality.[13] Thus, the combination of polar opposites seems to be a characteristically Friulian way of being. In a poem published posthumously in 1980, Pasolini describes Friuli as "un paese tra il mare e la montagna, / dove scoppiano grandi temporali...e poi nascono le primule sui fossi / inodore" (a land between sea and mountain, / where big storms breaks out...and then primroses bloom on the ditches / that have no odour).[14] Pasolini's image characterizes Friuli as a place of contrasts, where the sudden rage of rainstorms coexists with the gentle grace of primroses. Behind contrast, however, there is connection: as can often be observed in rural Friuli, which is notoriously the wettest place in Italy, wild primroses spring up in thick blankets on the moist ditch banks after

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[12] UNESCO, *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, s.v. "Friulian", accessed January 8, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap.

[13] See the report on a survey on Friulian self-perception carried out among university students by Linda Picco, "The 'Sportis' Project: Promotion of the Friulian Language and Investigations on the Mental Images Held by Students of the Udine University," *Friulian Journal of Science* 10 (2008): 107-121.

[14] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Un poeta delle Ceneri" (1966, also known by the earlier title, in English in the original draft, of "Who is me"), reprinted in *Bestemmia: Tutte le poesie*, ed. Walter Siti (Milan: Garzanti, 1994), 2:2056. These verses also give the title to a collection of Pasolini's essays edited by Nico Naldini, *Un paese di temporali e di primule* (Parma: Guanda, 1993).

the rain. With this image in mind, this volume sets out to explore the way in which the dialectical movements of geopolitics and culture combined to shape the Friulian language in its different contexts of use.

Why this book? For almost 150 years since Ascoli inaugurated the scientific study of Italian dialects, Friulian has been studied by linguists, historians, and literary scholars. Yet just a small part of their scholarship is a) available in English and b) brought together in a dialogue between different disciplines. The purpose of this book is thus twofold: to provide English-speaking readers with an in-depth and up-to-date account of the language and culture of Friuli from antiquity to the present; and to bring the perspective of different disciplines to bear on the common questions of why Friulian has developed the way it has, what its significance as a cultural expression is, and how it can negotiate its relationship to other languages on a global scale. To this end, the volume gathers together the work of ten contributors who are specialists in the fields of history (Fulvio Salimbeni), law (William Cisilino), linguistics (Paola Benincà, Franco Finco, Fabiana Fusco, and Carla Marcato) literary studies (Rosa Mucignat and Rienzo Pellegrini), and geography (Javier P. Grossutti). Olga Zorzi Pugliese is well known in the world of Italian studies as a Renaissance scholar, but her work for this volume is connected to her collateral research interest in the history of Friulian migration to Canada. The ten chapters are organized in four parts, each devoted to a broad thematic area: History and Status, Language and Culture, Migration, and Literature.

The book opens with a study by Fulvio Salimbeni, which offers an overview of the history of Friuli, painting a picture with broad brushstrokes of the major transformations in social and economic life, from pre-Roman Celtic cultures to the golden age of the Patriarchs of Aquileia in early Christendom, to the annexation to the Holy Roman Empire in the middle of the tenth century and later the century-long Venetian rule, until the Risorgimento. Salimbeni shows how the decades between 1860 and 1900 saw a rapid increase in labour migration towards Germany, France, and the Americas, all of which were common destinations for migrants from all parts of Italy, but also along less frequented routes towards Eastern Europe (Russia and Bosnia-Herzegovina especially). The events of the twentieth century are those which Salimbeni observes in most detail: the First World War, during which Friuli became a tragic battlefield for the German, Italian, and Austro-Hungarian armies; the Second World War, which saw Friuli being de facto annexed by the Third Reich, while a cruel civil war erupted between Fascists and two opposed partisan factions, the Catholic liberals and the communists, further complicated by the pressure of Yugoslav

troops on Italian territory;[15] and the catastrophic earthquake of 1976, which killed more than nine hundred people and left many towns and villages destroyed or significantly damaged, prompting a meticulous and relatively rapid reconstruction work, which also had the unpredicted effect of boosting regional identity and cohesion. Against this historical background, Salimbeni traces the evolution of the Friulian language, reconstructing key moments of linguistic and cultural history, with a special eye to the exchanges with the German and Slavic worlds. The essay is also a revisitation of Salimbeni's earlier book *Storia, lingua e società in Friuli* (History, Language and Society in Friuli) co-authored with Giuseppe Francescato in 1976, whose socio-linguistic approach is recognized as a turning point in the scholarship on Friuli and a model for the methodology of regional studies.

William Cisilino, in his chapter on language policies, provides an account of the major legislative milestones that guarantee the protection of the Friulian language, and describes the political and legal process that led to their promulgation. Cisilino gives a clear picture of the legal status of minority languages in Italy and of the European guidelines for their protection; he then presents the unique linguistic situation of Friuli-Venezia Giulia as a whole, providing data about the three minority languages present in the region's territory (Friulian, German, and Slovene). Having described earlier regulations implemented by the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, later reinforced at state level by the official recognition in 1999 of the Friulian linguistic community, Cisilino's focus moves to the most recent law for protection promulgated by the Region in 2007, which spurred heated controversy in Friuli and initiated a legal battle between the regional government and the central state. As the director of the regional body for the protection and promotion of Friulian (the *Agjenzie regjonâl pe lenghe furlane* or ARLeF), which was instituted by force of the 2007 law, Cisilino is uniquely positioned to clarify the legal issues around the measures proposed by the Region, and rejected by the Italian Parliament, in particular those concerning language education in schools and the use of Friulian in the public administration. Besides being an accurate and objective presentation of Friulian language policies, Cisilino's piece also shows how the case of Friuli can raise interesting points for comparison with minority

[15] On partisan warfare on the Eastern frontier, and on Stalin's plans for the annexation of Friuli and Trieste to Yugoslavia see, among others, Elena Agarossi and Victor Zaslavsky, *Stalin and Togliatti: Italy and the Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), 131-56.

language policy in other European countries, including Spain and the United Kingdom.

Paola Benincà's chapter "Friulian Linguistics" opens the section of the book dedicated to linguistics, and offers a masterful interpretation of the linguistic peculiarities of Friulian and its significance for the understanding of the development of the Romance system as a whole. Benincà looks at phonology, morphology, and morphosyntax, both at the level of synchronic and diachronic variation, demonstrating how the linguistic area of Friulian has proven to be an exceptional source of information for linguists. Even when similar processes are active in other Romance languages, Friulian offers a broader and theoretically more interesting framework of understanding. This is due to the specific historical and social situation of the region, which has remained separated from the surrounding areas, so that the various local dialects of Friuli have developed in relative autonomy. An analysis of Friulian can therefore shed light on other Romance varieties where the same phenomena have left but disconnected and insufficient traces, swept away by wider and more pervasive levelling processes than those that affected Friuli. Benincà illustrates her discussion of linguistic phenomena with examples from everyday speech as well as from ancient documents, including two among the earliest known literary texts in Friulian, the fourteenth-century ballads *Piruç myó doç inculurit* (Sweet Blush Pear of Mine), and *Biello dumnlo di valor* (Fair Lady of Worth).

In her survey of the Friulian lexicon, Carla Marcato sets out to identify the most distinctive words of the Friulian repertoire: words such as *mandi* ("goodbye") and *frut* ("child") which are habitually used and understood throughout Friuli, and also by those who have only a limited competence in Friulian. Marcato's chapter, which also contains a review of the existing lexicographic works for Friulian, from Jacopo Pirona's dictionary to her own studies of food and farming vocabulary, aims at writing a history of Friulian through words and word formation. It focuses especially on the two aspects of diatopic variation and lexical stratification. The territorial organization of Friuli in different districts, which started in Roman times and continued with the institution of the dioceses of Aquileia and Concordia, is reflected in the lexical differences between on the one hand western Friulian, and on the other east-central Friulian and the Friulian spoken in Carnia. Marcato also makes note of the origin and times of entry of loanwords and calques from other languages, which testify to cultural contacts and exchanges in different periods of history, going as far back as the presence of Roman troops from other parts of Italy who spoke a different regional Latin. An intense relationship to the German-speaking

world both in the Middle Ages and during the Habsburg domination brought many 'Germanisms' into Friulian. Furthermore, the Slovene farmers who settled in Friuli in the tenth century also made linguistic contributions, especially to the vocabulary of agriculture. Finally, the influence of cosmopolitan Venice makes itself felt in the numerous Venetisms, Frenchisms and other foreign loanwords that entered Friulian through Venetian.

Chapter five is Fabiana Fusco's study on the feminine gender in Friulian, investigating the gender bias inherent in language and the antiquated stereotypes of gender roles that can still be found in what we assume to be the most objective descriptions of any language: dictionaries. The idea that language is gendered harks back to Dante's language tract *De vulgari eloquentia*, where he argues that "vocabulorum quedam puerilia, quedam muliebria, quedam virilia" (some words can be seen as infantile, some as womanish, some as virile, VII, 2). Fusco starts by scrutinizing the debate among modern linguists around the existence of a "female language" distinct from the language of men, and on whether women are more or less conservative than men in their use of language, exposing how little of the discussion is based on actual empirical evidence. She then proceeds to analyse entries in the most important Italian and Friulian dictionaries in order to show how they present a distorted image of women, not just in the definitions, but also indirectly through the choice of idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and illustrative quotations with a sexist content. Fusco's investigation forces us to reconsider our attitude towards dictionaries and recognize how the negative stereotyping of women still permeates current linguistic usage in both Italian and Friulian.

Part three of the book focuses on the history of Friulian out-migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Franco Finco's chapter "Friulian Migration to Latin America: Linguistic Reflexes" acts as a link to the previous section on linguistics, as it analyses how migrants' experience has sedimented in the language in the form of linguistic mixing, hybridisation, and assimilation. As it was for most migrants from Northern Italy, Latin America and Argentina in particular were the most popular destinations for Friulians in search of a better life. Large-scale migration of Friulians to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay began in 1877 and continued until after Second World War. Most migrants spoke only Friulian and had little knowledge of Italian, but once they settled in their new home they came into contact with migrants from other parts of Italy, especially Veneto, as well as with the local population. Friulian and Venetan varieties spoken in migrant communities intermingled between themselves and were influenced by the language of their respective host

country, either Spanish or Portuguese. Still to this day, inhabitants of a few rural settlements in Argentina and Brazil speak a type of Friulian that resulted from this merging of languages, and was facilitated by their common Romance origin. Through a detailed observation of the phenomena of linguistic transfer, Finco offers an illuminating insight into the life and work of thousands of Friulians who carried their language with them in distant lands, adapting and modifying it in the process, and passing it on to the next generation.

Chapter seven is entitled "'In the Hands of the Italians': Friulian Mosaic and Terrazzo Workers in London." There, Javier P. Grossutti reveals the little-known history of the first Friulian migrant entrepreneurs in London, working in a trade that has been for centuries, and still is, the domain of Friulian craftsmen: terrazzo flooring and mosaic. This craft is traditionally practiced in the foothill area of Western Friuli around Spilimbergo, where a specialist school has been training internationally renowned mosaic workers since 1922. Through archival research and oral testimonies, Grossutti has been able to reconstruct the story of the first Friulian mosaic workers who arrived in London via Paris in the 1870s. One of them was Pietro Mazzioli, whose team of mosaic workers from the small town of Sequals executed the mosaics in important public buildings such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the London Coliseum (now the home of the English National Opera), and Westminister Cathedral. Grossutti brings to light an interesting aspect of this category of highly skilled migrant workers: despite being a relatively small and largely apolitical group, they were extremely active in the creation of workers' association and unions. The work of Friulian- and British-owned terrazzo companies in the UK continued into the twentieth century, interrupted only by the internment and deportation of Italian men as "enemy aliens" during World War II, until it was hit by the economic crisis of the Seventies.

Olga Zorzi Pugliese extends the line of enquiry of Grossutti's paper to North America and the second half of the twentieth century. Her study considers the contribution of Friulian mosaic workers to Canadian art, focusing on mosaic decoration of particular artistic merit. Using newspaper articles from the time and the oral testimonies of members of the Friulian communities in Canada, Zorzi Pugliese tells of how, since the 1920s, a large number of Friulians (mostly graduates of the Spilimbergo mosaic school from the towns of Sequals, Arba and Bertiolo), established their own terrazzo and marble companies in Canada, contributing to the creation of such exceptional artwork as the mosaics on the vaulted ceiling of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the decoration of the

Thomas Foster Memorial in Uxbridge. With the aid of numerous photographs, Zorzi Pugliese describes in detail the beautiful mosaics she has been able to locate in churches, schools, government buildings, business establishments and private homes across Canada. The artworks were almost always materially executed by Friulian craftsmen and designed by Italian or local artists, with some exceptions: the mosaics of the Basilica of Ste-Anne-De Beaupré, designed and executed by the Friulian Walter Del Mistro; and the work of another Friulian mosaic artist, Giovanni Gerometta, who still continues to create wall mosaics that have been positively received by art critics.

The fourth and final section of the volume looks at aspects of Friulian literature. Chapter nine, by Rosa Mucignat, offers a reassessment of one of Pier Paolo Pasolini's least known works, the novel *Il sogno di una cosa* (The Dream of Something), written in various stages between 1949 and 1962 and set in Friuli in the immediate post-war period. The novel is a coming-of-age story concerning three young men and their families in the context of a rapidly changing peasant society. Eligio, Nini, and Milio become friends in the long summer nights of dancing and drinking at the village fêtes on the low Friuli plain. Their youth, however, is short-lived: striving for a better future, they are faced with the alternative of migration or political activism at home. The novel shows how their aspirations clash with the realities of a post-war Europe that is rapidly coalescing into a new order, no less oppressive than Fascism. The title is taken from one of Marx's letters, and evokes the state of mind in which someone yearns for something of which they are only half aware. The dreamers, scarcely awakened from their centuries-long slumber, are the Friulian peasantry whom Pasolini admired and loved, and their half-formed dream is emancipation and material wellbeing. Despite being written in standard Italian, *Il sogno* is arguably the work in which Pasolini engaged most closely with the geographical, anthropological and historical realities in which the Friulian language existed. Through its complex and sympathetic representation of the social world of the Friulian peasantry, the novel testifies to the profound continuity that exists for Pasolini between linguistic concerns and political action, in his Friulian years as well as later on, when his interest shifted to other peripheries in Italy and beyond.

The book ends with Rienzo Pellegrini's survey of recent poetry in Friulian. In this fascinating examination of Friulian poetry of the last sixty years, Pellegrini locates the beginning of a new Friulian poetics in the year 1942, which was both 150 years since Pietro Zorutti's birth and the year of publication of Pasolini's *Poesie a Casarsa*, when the baton symbolically passed from the older to the younger poet. Pasolini's Friulian works are a

direct challenge to the conventional sentimentality and moralism of previous regional poetry. His vision of Friulian is of an exclusively poetic language, on a par with ancient Provençal, uncontaminated by the self-consciousness and alienation of modernity. Pasolini's ideal clashes with the growing ambition on the part of other Friulian intellectuals to make Friulian into a modern language that could be used in all spheres of communication, and even substitute Italian in official use. Pellegrini follows the development of contemporary Friulian poetry along this faultline, presenting a close reading of three poems about the river Tagliamento: *L'âga dal Tajamènt* (The Water of the Tagliamento, 1969) by Siro Angeli; *Tiliment* (Tagliamento, 1987) by Amedeo Giacomini; and *La Grava* (The River Bed, 2004) by Novella Cantarutti. Despite the evident thematic correspondence, Pellegrini's reading reveals how the poems, each written in a different Friulian variety, conjure up different images of the same river landscape and construct different metaphorical associations.

Displacement in time and/or space, and the relationship with a more powerful majority discourse are often the defining factors of minority cultures. For many, the "piccola patria" of Friuli is a horizon that recedes from view, and its landscape is one of memory and loss. The challenges that face Friulian today are the same that confront other minority languages and groups around the world: going beyond survival and preservation to engage actively with new practices and contexts of use; carving up a place for themselves in the capacious but dispersive space of the global media; and avoiding what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih have called "a reactive notion of authenticity," which transforms the action of reclaiming a suppressed cultural identity into a mechanism that fetishizes purity and excludes difference and change.[16] Writing on Edoardo Firpo, a poet who wrote in the Genoese dialect, Pier Paolo Pasolini argued that Firpo produced his best work, free from the commonplace picturesque elements of his earlier poetry, near the end of his life. Only then, after he had realized that "la sua Genova era un sogno" (his Genoa was a dream), could he freely express "la realtà di quel sogno"

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[16] Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, "Thinking Through the Minor, Transnationally," Introduction to *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2005), 9. For the Italian context, see for instance Stefano Cavazza's study of the use of regional traditions in Fascist propaganda, *Piccole patrie: Feste popolari tra regione e nazione durante il fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997); and also Paolo Coluzzi, *Minority Language Planning and Micronationalism in Italy: An Analysis of the Situation of Friulian, Cimbrian and Western Lombard with Reference to Spanish Minority Languages* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007).

(the reality of that dream).[17] Minor languages and dialects such as Friulian, Genoese, and those of diasporic peoples around the globe, carry within themselves cultural markers that speak of a world which is constantly under threat yet, in some form or other, still lives on—be it the vanishing ways of life of a city or a region, or the migrants' memories of their homeland. Thus, if a minority culture is to play upon its strengths, it needs to be aware of the ambiguous space it occupies: between past and present, centre and margins, or, as Pasolini has expressed, between dream and reality.

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[17] Pasolini, "Un poeta in genovese" (1956), now in *Passione e Ideologia* (Milan: Garzanti, 1960), 302.

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# PART I

# HISTORY AND STATUS

# CHAPTER ONE

# HISTORY, LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY IN FRIULI (THIRTY YEARS LATER)

FULVIO SALIMBENI

## 1. Introduction

In 1976, the volume *Storia, lingua e società in Friuli* (History, Language and Society in Friuli) was published in Udine by Casamassima.[1] Strictly speaking, it had been written jointly; every line of the text had been collectively discussed by Giuseppe Francescato, one of the major Italian linguists and an accomplished scholar of Friulian, and myself, at that time embarking on my career as a scholar of regional history. The book, as one of its first reviews recognised, introduced a new perspective to the study of linguistic history: language was no longer seen in isolation but analysed within a precise and defined historical and cultural context, to clarify which various methodological and historiographical factors came into play.

On the one hand, our work was indebted to Giacomo Devoto's *Profilo di storia linguistica italiana* (Profile of Italian Linguistic History) of 1953. Another important influence was the innovative *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Linguistic History of United Italy) by Tullio De Mauro, who linked political and linguistic national events in a fertile dialectic relationship, marking a significant turning point in the centuries-old "questione della lingua" (language question).[2] We also drew on Manlio Cortelazzo's dialectological studies and on Giovan Battista Pellegrini's

[1] The volume was subsequently re-published in 2004 in its original form, on the initiative of Vincenzo Orioles by Il Calamo, Rome, after the premature death of Giuseppe Francescato in 2001.
[2] Giacomo Devoto, *Profilo di storia linguistica italiana* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1953); Tullio De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Bari: Laterza, 1970).

*Saggi di linguistica italiana* (Essays on Italian Linguistics).[3] On the other hand, equally relevant was the way in which our work recalled the recent and similarly fundamental contribution by Carlo Dionisotti in his *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Geography and History of Italian Literature).[4] Dionisotti had taken the lead from Carlo Cattaneo's concept of a multifaceted Italy, made up of city-states and communes that had existed since the Middle Ages, and should not be ironed out by a uniform and homogenous centralising model, such as the Florentine one proposed later on by Alessandro Manzoni. This thesis had found a timely methodological and theoretical formulation in a 1914 study by Giovanni Crocioni, entitled *Le regioni e la cultura nazionale* (Regions and National Culture).[5] Crocioni, who not coincidentally was a long-time Federalist and a Republican, gave back to national culture its regional dimension. This fundamental shift in perspective from national to local was observed also by well-regarded historian Cinzio Violante, in more specific historiographical terms, in a series of articles on Italian history, which he revised and synthesised in a volume he edited in 1982.[6] As far as I am concerned, another important influence was my collaboration with the *Istituto per le ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa* (Institute for Research in Social and Religious History), founded in Vicenza in 1975 by Gabriele De Rosa, a true master of historical studies, where the microhistorical and regional dimension of investigation and a multidisciplinary approach were strongly valued.

With the aid of these historiographical references, and bearing in mind the lesson of Graziadio Isaia Ascoli's "Saggi ladini" (Ladin Essays) with which he inaugurated the *Archivio Glottologico Italiano* (Italian Glottological Archive) in 1873, we sifted through all available sources both on linguistic and historical aspects, with special attention to the main existing reference works on regional history by Leicht, Paschini, and Mor.[7] We discussed the framework of the study with friends and

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[3] Manlio Cortelazzo, *Avviamento critico allo studio della dialettologia italiana* (Pisa: Pacini, 1969–72); Giovan Battista Pellegrini, *Saggi di linguistica italiana: Storia, struttura, società* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1975).

[4] Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967).

[5] Giovanni Crocioni, *Le regioni e la cultura nazionale* (Catania: Battiato, 1914).

[6] Cinzio Violante, ed., *La storia locale: Temi, fonti e metodi della ricerca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982).

[7] Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, "Saggi ladini," *Archivio glottologico italiano* 1 (1873): 1-556; Pier Silverio Leicht, *Breve storia del Friuli* (Udine: Aquileia, 1931); Pio Paschini, *Storia del Friuli* (Udine: 1953–54); Carlo Guido Mor and Gianfranco

colleagues, two of whom deserve special mention: Franco Crevatin, who had introduced us to one another, and Paola Càssola Guida, who checked the sections on pre- and proto-history, which we were less knowledgeable about. Eventually, we sat down to write the book in the summer of 1975, bearing in mind Gaetano Perusini's methodological guidelines. In a conference paper entitled "Friuli, quadrivio d'Europa" (Friuli, Quadrivium of Europe), Perusini underlined how Friuli, which is peripheral and marginal in relation to Rome, is indeed central if seen in a European perspective.[8] In fact, the region is the point of confluence and meeting of the three main continental cultures, Latin-Romance, Germanic and Slavic, as it is situated at the intersection of thousand-year-old paths of communication from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea and from the Po Valley to that of the Danube. This is why the regional historical and linguistic matters relating to Friuli need to be viewed in a wider European perspective. This was a principle that the historian Gioacchino Volpe (Paganica 1876–Santarcangelo di Romangna 1971) had already strongly advocated when teaching the Risorgimento at the School of Modern History in Rome in the Thirties. One of his students was the Istrian Ernesto Sestan, who would remember this when he wrote the classic and still unsurpassed *Venezia Giulia: Lineamenti di una storia etnica e culturale* (Venezia Giulia: Features of an Ethnic and Cultural History) in 1947, which was another of the models that the two co-authors looked up to.[9]

As a book, *Storia, lingua e società in Friuli* aimed at tracing a broad outline of the socio-linguistic history of Friuli from antiquity to today, taking due account of the different factors and elements at play. The periodization was based, as is customary, on political history, given that various shifts in power have always coincided with substantial changes that are also cultural in the broadest sense, revealing a sort of pendulum motion typical of a frontier region like Friuli between the East and West, Mitteleuropa and the Mediterranean.

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Ellero, *Conversazioni sulla storia del Friuli, d'Italia e d'Europa* (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1988).

[8] Gaetano Perusini, "Friuli, quadrivio d'Europa," in *Valori e Funzioni della Cultura Tradizionale: III Convegno dell'Istituto per gli Incontri culturali mitteleuropei, 21-25 settembre 1968* (Gorizia: IICM, 1969), 255-259.

[9] Ernesto Sestan, *Venezia Giulia: Lineamenti di una storia etnica e culturale* (Rome: Edizioni Italiane, 1947).

# 2. Friuli in Ancient History

Even before the arrival of Illiric peoples from the Balkan area, there were traces of the Castellieri culture, spread as it was throughout the Mediterranean area and being comparable to the Nuragic civilisation of Sardinia. Moreover, myths and legends linked to the Trojan cycle, as well as archaeological evidence, indicate relationships with the Aegean-Anatolian area through the Adriatic since around 1000 B.C. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the Gaulish tribe of the Carni (whence toponyms such as Carnia, Karst, Carniola derive), belonging to the Celtic group, settled in the area alongside the pre-existing Venetic peoples. Yet, it was only in 181 B.C that Friuli truly entered history, when the Romans founded the city of Aquileia. Aquileia was designed to be a stronghold against invasions from the East but soon became the base for Roman expansion towards Istria and the areas of the Danube and the Balkans. In the imperial era, Aquileia was one of the ten main Mediterranean trading centres, and in the Tetrarchan era it was also one of the temporary seats of the imperial court.

As the capital of the *Regio X Venetiae et Histria*, Aquileia became the privileged location for commercial exchanges between Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch, and the northern provinces of the Empire. Travelling with these goods were also men and ideas, including new Eastern religions like the Mithraic Mysteries and Christianity itself, which after the Edict of Toleration in 313 A.D. had rapidly become established. Aquileian bishops soon took on significant roles in the episcopacy and their seat became the starting point for the Christianisation of the surrounding areas. Thus, the Aquileian metropolitan area eventually had jurisdiction over sixteen dioceses stretching from Como to Salzburg and Ljubljana.

At the height of its grandeur, Aquileia could boast around one hundred thousand inhabitants, but with the waning of the Western Empire, its commercial fortunes began to decline too. However, its ecclesiastical function as the nerve centre for the whole of north-east Italy, the northern Adriatic area and the current territories of lower Austria, Slovenia and Croatia increased even further. Sacked and devastated by Attila’s Huns in 453, Aquileia’s economic function was taken over by a growing Venice, who would inherit its mediating, mercantile and cultural role between East and West, Baltic and Adriatic. In the same way, when Venice declined in the eighteenth century, Trieste took on this legacy, propelled onto the international scene by the intelligent and enlightened reform policies of the Habsburgs. For a long time Trieste would be called “new Venice,” just as Venice had been thought of as the “new Aquileia,” in a sort of ideal handover that reaffirmed the centrality of the Adriatic area in Europe and

its continuing role as mediator between different worlds and realities, whichever the dominating urban centre—Aquileia Venice, or Trieste, which in any case are all enclosed in an area of land and sea making up little more than a hundred kilometres.

In 568, after a brief Gothic and Byzantine interlude, the Lombards came to Friuli to settle there permanently and made *Forum Juli* (Cividale), whence the name Friuli, the capital of their first dukedom. *Forum Juli* always retained a sort of primacy in the Lombard kingdom, which had Pavia as its capital. It was precisely between the sixth and seventh centuries that the region took on the multi-ethnic and plurilingual nature that has characterized it ever since. The Germanic Lombards were spread throughout the regional territory, apart from the coastline and the Grado lagoon, which were controlled by the Byzantines and later by the Venetians, who took over in the eighth century—hence the local dialectal variety, completely distinct from Friulian. Alongside these two, there was also the Slavic element, as a result of a migration provoked by the pressure of Avar tribes, which were driven back by the Lombard dukes only with great difficulty. Slavic populations settled on the eastern borders of the region, in the so-called Venetian Slav-land, on the hills behind Cividale and in the Karst of the Isonzo and Trieste areas. This gave rise to the co-existence of Latin, Germanic and Slavic dialects, which would remain a peculiarity of this territory.

In terms of religion, in the seventh century the bishops of Aquileia had just overcome a temporary crisis (the so-called Schism of the Three Chapters), and although their seat officially remained in the ancient Roman city, they moved their residence first to Cormons, then to Cividale, and finally to Udine, gaining the title of Patriarchs and, as time went by, a growing temporary power. After the invasion of Charlemagne's Franks and the fall of the Lombard reign, the Duchy of Friuli was incorporated into the new *Regnum Italiae* and later into the Holy Roman Empire, becoming the eastern stronghold of the Carolingian dynasty against the looming threat of Slavic populations on its borders.

## 3. From the Middle Ages to the Risorgimento

It was, however, in the middle of the tenth century, when the Saxon dynasty had established itself on the imperial throne, that a drastic regional re-orientation took place. Friuli, as well as the area of today's Trentino-Alto Adige, was detached from the Italian kingdom by Otto I and directly incorporated into the Empire, in order to guarantee the constant control of the two main paths of communication between Germany and Italy. For

centuries afterwards, the patriarchs of Aquileia were of German origin and many aristocratic families from across the Alps settled in Friuli, leaving important traces on the toponymy and on the territory, such as their fortified residences and castles. In this way, Friuli became a sort of Germanic outpost in northern Italy. Later, German populations migrated to Friuli to work in the mines of the Dolomites and Carnia, giving rise to the Germanophone islands of Sauris and Timau that still exist today and continue to be protected by law as linguistic minorities.[10]

The situation changed again towards the middle of the thirteenth century—following the struggle between Papacy and Empire—with the transfer of the patriarchy from Ghibelline to Guelph prelates from Lombardy (the Torriani or Della Torre), who realigned these territories towards Italy. Merchants, entrepreneurs, notaries and craftsmen arrived in greater and greater numbers, particularly from Tuscany—as shown by one of the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*—and, as the years passed, from Venice and Veneto too. This transformation, which was both political and cultural, culminated in the fifteenth century after a long series of wars, when La Serenissima definitively took possession of what had become the "Magnifica Patria del Friuli" (Magnificent Fatherland of Friuli) and also brought to an end, in 1445, the political power of the patriarchs, whose function became solely spiritual. When the dynasty of the Counts of Gorizia died out in 1500, the countship was inherited by the Habsburg, who held the title until 1918. Therefore, Friuli found itself politically divided between Venice and the House of Habsburg, even if this was never an obstacle to commercial and cultural exchanges.

Being under Venetian rule was not at all a disadvantage—unlike what was maintained for a long time by a short-sighted localistic historiography, which considered the disappearance of patriarchal rule to have brought regional history to an end. On the contrary, it was exceedingly beneficial, since it placed the region in an international context and in a world-class artistic and cultural environment. This was because, even after losing its political primacy after the wars of the sixteenth century, Venice remained, using Fernand Braudel's terminology, one of the "world-cities" in economic and intellectual European life, which found its ideal centres in Venice and in the university of Padua. For the peripheral region of Friuli, being part of Venetian cultural life, which was enriched by the activity of the "prince" of publishers Aldo Manuzio, by the art of Titian, Tintoretto, Palladio, Tiepolo, by literary figures such as Pietro Bembo and then Carlo

[10] On language protection laws for Friulian see William Cisilino's account in chapter 2 below.

Goldoni and the brothers Carlo and Gasparo Gozzi, by musicians and philosophers like Antonio Vivaldi and Antonio Schinella Conti (known as Abbé Conti)—could not but have positive consequences.[11] Moreover, Carlo Ginzburg's celebrated book on Menocchio Scandella, entitled *Il formaggio e i vermi* (The Cheese and the Worms), clearly documents the circulation, even in a supposedly depressed and marginal Friuli, of heterodox ideas and heretical ferment which arrived and spread in the region through contact with Venetian radical circles.[12] Eighteenth-century Friuli gave a noteworthy contribution to national scholarship with the works of the poet Daniele Florio (Udine 1710–1789) and the antiquarian Gian Giuseppe Liruti (Villafredda nel Friuli 1689–1780), in which the influence of Muratori can clearly be seen. All this is also reflected in the linguistic customs and in the progressive enrichment of the local language.[13]

The end of the centuries-long Venetian rule in 1797, following the Treaty of Campo Formio between Napoleon and Austria, did not particularly change this situation; after two decades of French rule, Friuli was incorporated into the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, whose administrative capital was still Venice, even if economically it leaned towards Trieste, which was quickly and turbulently growing and attracting many Friulians in want of better material living conditions.

The nineteenth century saw Friulians in the front line of various episodes of the Risorgimento: the heroic resistance at the fortress of Osoppo in 1848; Pier Fortunato Calvi's uprisings in Cadore and their regional offshoots in 1853; and the 1864 insurrection of Navarons, supported by Mazzini. Friuli was finally annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1866. During these years, a number of notable political and cultural personalities established themselves and increasingly consolidated intellectual relations with Italy. Among them there are: the journalist Pacifico Valussi (Talmassons 1813–Udine 1893); the historian Prospero Antonini (Udine 1809–Florence 1884); the painter and patriot

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[11] Recent studies on women's writing between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries by Fabiana Savorgnan di Brazzà of the University of Udine, are incontrovertibly bringing this fact to light: see her *Scrittura al femminile nel Friuli dal Cinquecento al Settecento* (Udine: Gaspari, 2011).

[12] Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi: Il cosmo di un mugnaio del Cinquecento* (Turin: Einaudi 1976). English translation by John and Anne Tedeschi, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980).

[13] See Carla Marcato's analysis of foreign loanwords that entered Friulian through Venetian in chapter 4 below.