





Gorizia and the Province of Gorizia in the Middle Ages

The mediaeval history of the province of Gorizia began with the deed of donation of Emperor Otto III on 28 April 1001. At that time, almost a millennium ago, the name of the place (*villa*) *Gorizia, que Sclavorum lingua vocatur Goriza*, was written for the first time, and the territory *inter Ysoncium et Wipaum et Ortaona atque iuga Alpium* that was later called the province of Gorizia was drawn. The feudal lord of half of the territory, the Patriarchate of Aquileia and Patriarch Johannes IV were also recorded in the document. The second half was donated to Count Verihen (the deed of donation of Otto III from 27 October 1001), yet he could not have been the first of the later mighty dynasty of the Counts of Gorizia. The image of the province of Gorizia from the eleventh century is very incomplete because of the lack of written documentation. Conjectures can only be made about relations between the Patriarchate of Aquileia, the greatest feudal lord in Friuli and the neighbouring territories, and Count Verihen or, rather, his heirs. Much credit was due to the Patriarchs of Aquileia for the revival of the territories devastated by the Hungarians, primarily in Friuli. Yet in 1077 the Patriarchs expanded their ecclesiastic authority to administrative matters. This was possible through legal offices which they bestowed on chosen feudal lords. Maybe it was due to Aquileian lawyers that the family of Bavarian or rather Carinthian lords acquired estates in the Soča region and in Friuli. Since the first quarter of the twelfth century they were called the Counts of Gorizia (*comes de Goerze*) after their rights as counts that they possessed in Carinthia, and not after the province of Gorizia, which had not yet existed at that time. The County of Gorizia was first recorded as *Comitatus Goritiensis* in 1217. In the twelfth century (1130, 1150, 1202) the possessions along the river Soča and in Friuli belonging to the Counts of Gorizia were still regarded as an Aquileian fief. The possessions were characterized by some important geographical features; the most convenient passage from the Apennines to the Balkans and vice versa through the lower Soča valley. This important feature had determined the administrative conditions of Roman-Byzantine authority since the early Middle Ages, then the Lombardic Duchy in Friuli and the Frankish Friulian Mark. The latter subsequently confirmed the secular power of the Patriarchs of Aquileia on the territory 'in the Italic Kingdom, in the County of Friuli' as stated in a document from the end of the eleventh century. The territory of Friuli and its surroundings, demographically and economically devastated by incursions of the Hungarians, were a heavy burden from the past. The legal offices performed by the Counts of Gorizia for the Patriarchate of Aquileia (including some dioceses in the south of Tyrol) brought them considerable power and reputation. They acquired many estates in Friuli (Latisana, Belgrado, Flambro, Precenico, Codroipo, Castelnuovo) as far as Tilmento. Together with the land they had soon obtained several rights that reinforced their administrative power and facilitated the formation of their own dynastic territory. On account of that disputes arose between them and the Patriarch of Aquileia as early as the middle of the twelfth century. The dispute in 1150 indicated that the Patriarchate of Aquileia had retained its domination, yet in 1202 several es-

tates were enfeoffed to the Counts, including Gorizia. According to this contract the estates would have been returned to Aquileia should the Counts (including the female line) become extinct, yet their present power was considerably strengthened. The thirteenth century was the period when the Counts rose to great prominence, and Gorizia had simultaneously grown from a village to a centre of feudal possessions.

At the time when Gorizia was first mentioned in written sources, it was still a village. A vital factor for the Slovene settlement of the place was that the Slovene origin of its name was explicitly emphasized. However, archaeological finds proved that the continuity of settlement at the location of Gorizia stretched as far back as Antiquity. Around the year 1000, when the first written monuments of the Slovene language were made, the presence of the Slovene or rather Slavonic people there was such that they named the place in Slovene.

At the time when Gorizia was first recorded in written documents there was no administrative or ecclesiastic centre; this assumption is based on simultaneous reference to the castle in Solkan, which had no important role in subsequent development. Solkan was mentioned together with the feudal estates of the monasteries in Možac (1118) and Rožac (1221) and other feudal lords, mostly ministerials of the Counts of Gorizia. The parish of Solkan played a more important role; it was indirectly mentioned about the year 1181 (priest Ivan of Solkan), and it had been run by parish priest Andrej since 1194. At that time Gorizia was part of the parish of Solkan. In the middle of the fourteenth century the priests of Solkan were appointed priests of Gorizia as well, in *plebe Salcan alias Goricie*. In the eleventh century Gorizia (*loco Goriza*) was mentioned in connection with the donation of the estate of a certain *Heinricus de Guriza* from a noble family (perhaps a relative of Verihen) to the Diocese of Brixen. He was mentioned again around 1090 and in 1102.

The castle as a typical feature of a mediaeval settlement was first mentioned in Gorizia in 1202, two centuries after the settlement had been first mentioned, which, of course, did not indicate that it was built only at that time. During the thirteenth century the castle was recorded in documents several times (1230, 1250, twice in 1267, 1277, 1292). The growth of Gorizia from a village to a town was probably connected with the castle as the centre of dominion and the expanding dynastic territory, similar to other mediaeval urban settlements. On the top of the castle hill houses of ministerials, merchants, artisans and officials were added to the buildings of the original village around the castle. Thus the centre of an urban settlement was created, yet simultaneously there still existed a village on the south-western part of the hill from the year 1001. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the settlement was developed to such an extent that Emperor Otto IV granted it market deeds in 1210. The granting of a weekly fair was one of the conditions for the rise of the Counts of Gorizia to Princes of the Province. Each year a fair was held in Gorizia on the festival of St. John the Baptist. Additionally, Count Meinhard III released the inhabitants of Gorizia of all bonds for seven years, under obligation to repair the bridges across the river Soča. In denominations of Gorizia the settlement around the castle, a borough or a town, *oppidum superius* (in the chronicles of Martin Bavčer) or *terra superiore*, was gradually distinguished from the village, as indicated in the document of 1307 (*tam in villa quam in foro*).

The importance and development of Gorizia were closely connected with the Counts of Gorizia. Gorizia and its surroundings were probably the fief where the lawyers of the Patriarchate of Aquileia provided their services, and since the beginning of the twelfth century, as mentioned above, that office had been performed by the Counts of Gorizia. Legal offices and the judicature were rich economic sources; it was in the judicature that the Counts of Gorizia started appropriating rights that were not their due.

They sought to establish their own autonomous province outside the Patriarchate of Aquileia and the Duchy of Friuli by expanding their power. A series of impotent Patriarchs following Berthold of Andechs after the year 1251 facilitated the achievement of their goals, the conclusion of family bonds playing a vital role. The bond with the family of the Counts of Tyrol was of special importance after 1250 when Meinhard IV married the daughter of Albert, the last Count of Tyrol. After the death of his father-in-law (in 1253) he thus inherited half of the Tyrolean estates, and after the death of the heirs of the other half (the Hirschbergs) their share as well. In 1271 Meinhard's sons Albert I and Meinhard V divided between themselves the estates of Tyrol and Gorizia. Thus two lines were created: Meinhard's Tyrolean-Gorizian line with estates in Tyrol, and Albert's Gorizian line with estates in the Soča region, Istria, Karst, Friuli, Carniola and Carinthia. Meinhard was a particularly powerful dynast because he obtained Carniola in pledge and Carinthia was enfeoffed to him; he was enthroned according to local custom as the Duke of Carinthia. However, after the death of his son Heinrich (in 1335), who was appointed King of Bohemia, the Tyrolean line died out. Carniola and Carinthia devolved to the Habsburgs. A few years later (1342) the Gorizian line was divided into the Istrian and narrower Gorizian line. The estates of the Istrian line were in Istria and the Slovene Mark, and the estates of the Gorizian line in the Soča region, Karst and Friuli. After the extinction of the Istrian line in 1374 their estates were inherited by the Habsburgs, heirs of the last Count of Gorizia, Lenart, who died in 1500 without issue.

The vast estates of the Counts of Gorizia and their family lines, stretching from the eastern Tyrol to Istria, were connected with numerous ministerials who managed the estates in individual provinces for the Counts. The Counts additionally obtained the right to mint money, and collect toll and customs tariffs. The position of the Captain General of Aquileia, which they had acquired for a lengthy period of time as early as at the end of the thirteenth century, was of equal importance. Yet the title of Princes of the Province was more important for affirmation of their power. The Tyrolean line obtained the title in 1286 when they became the Dukes of Carinthia, and the Gorizian line in 1365 under the rule of King Karl IV. The title meant that their bonds with the Patriarchate of Aquileia and the County of Friuli were severed. Friuli had developed into a province (*Patria*) with its autonomous council (parliament) and provincial law (*Constitutiones Patriae Foroiulii*, 1366). The provincial law of Friuli was also in force in the County of Gorizia with minor alterations: in the German translation of the constitutions the name of the Patriarch of Aquileia was substituted with that of the Count of Gorizia. In the fourteenth century courtly offices were transformed into provincial ones due to the transformation of Gorizian dominion into a province. Offices of heads as deputies of the Count of Gorizia in the administration and judicature were introduced in Lienz, Gorizia, Metlika and Pazin, yet, as a document from 1325 stated, the Count 'had retained his power over everything.' The Counts supported the administrative offices and did not pledge them to lower aristocrats. In that way they attempted to achieve greater efficiency and dependence. In the Province of Gorizia the provincial aristocracy began to develop in the fourteenth century. However, the first traces of the States can be found in records during the period of Lenart, the last Count of Gorizia.

The whole vast possession of the Counts of Gorizia had no territorial unity, being dispersed. The position of the region of Tolmin is worth mentioning here. It could have been a link between the estates of the Counts of Gorizia in the lower Soča region and those in the Drava valley in Carinthia. However, they had only possessed it for a short period of time during the fourteenth century. Otherwise the region of Tolmin was firmly in the hands of the Patriarchate of Aquileia; after 1377 the landowner had been the

Chapter of Cividale. The 'Front County of Gorizia' was created in the fourteenth century out of the estates in eastern Tyrol and northern Carinthia, with the centre in Lienz and the residential castle of the Counts of Gorizia in nearby Bruck, and the 'Back County of Gorizia' out of the estates along the river Soča. When the Count attempted to join both parts into a single province in 1456, he failed because the Counts of Gorizia had lost their Carinthian estates in struggles for the inheritance of the Counts of Celje with the Peace of Požarnica in 1460. That was the period of decline of power of the Counts of Gorizia, which had begun with the sudden death of Heinrich II on 23 April 1323. After his death all his newly acquired estates in northern Italy were lost (Conegliano, Treviso, Padua). Thus the period of decline of power of the Counts of Gorizia, more than a century and a half long, had begun. Around the year 1390 the County was threatened by the Bavarian Dukes. The predicament was solved by the intervention of the aristocracy of Gorizia: they paid damages to the Bavarians out of the money collected from them, and in return they demanded a third of the estates of Gorizia.

Gorizia developed in the face of constant efforts by the Counts of Gorizia to consolidate their authority and to preserve the position they had achieved. After the granting of market deeds (in 1210), the next step was the statute of 1307; it was granted to the borough by one of the most powerful Counts of Gorizia, Heinrich II. The statute, valid for the borough and the village, was drafted according to Aquileian models, and the inhabitants of Gorizia had probably respected the same regulations even before 1307. It contained numerous regulations governing trade. One of them was that one third of the livestock purchased in the region between Gorizia and Razdrto had to be sold in Gorizia; if purchased further away, all of it had to be sold in Gorizia. Meat, cheese, salt and similar food had to be sold only in a public square in Gorizia, and wine also in the village. The days of St. Bartholomew and St. Andrew were appointed for fairs. The inhabitants of Gorizia were obliged to repair bridges, the town hall, the borough gate and the walls. They were exempted from the payment of taxes, yet they paid excise and provided the provisions and other goods in times of war. Jews were obliged to perform night-watch duties like other inhabitants. The text of the statute was supplemented by Count Meinhard VII (1351). The statute itself was followed by the act of granting civic rights to Gorizia in the period between 1392 and 1398. The settlement of Gorizia had still retained the duality of the borough and village, or the town and village, which came to an end in 1455 when Count Heinrich IV joined both places and granted civic rights to the united town of Gorizia.

The legal status of the settlement influenced the demographic and urban development. The castle occupied a central position in the town. There were numerous records in written documents from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries about the castle, the Counts of Gorizia and the system of their authority. The bridge near the entrance to the castle was mentioned, as well as the chapel where services were performed by chaplains of the Counts of Gorizia. Part of the castle was a *palazzio* (1330). Two further ones were mentioned (1321) as well as a small room (1277), balcony and hall, the conference room of Heinrich II (died in 1323), the room where the Count resided and the one of his wife Beatrice. In addition to that there was also a pantry, probably an armoury as well, a great room above and the upper hall. During the absence of the Count the castle was protected by the Castle Count (*Burggraf*). At the turn of the fourteenth century Gorizia already possessed the town hall, borough gate and the town walls, as recorded in the first statute. There were several records of the town hall where disputes were solved (1307, 1337, 1405, 1471; once mentioned as the *loggia*); the first record of the house of magistrate Koman originated from 1285. Further records were of the market-place in the borough (and also in the village) for trading during fairs;

there were records of the butcher's stall in 1312, bakery in 1390 and a bath in 1398. The chapel of the Holy Spirit was erected in 1399. The borough of Gorizia had two gates, the great one in the south-west, and the small one in the north in the direction of the parish church in Solkan. There were fortification towers by the gates. Houses were in the possession of the Counts of Gorizia, who enfeoffed them. Otherwise there were houses of other land-owners as well. The names of individual parts of Gorizia were recorded in written documents literally as: By the Great Gate, Outside the Great Gate, By the Small Gate, Behind the Castle, By the Bridge, By the Public Square, By the Town Walls, By the Town Hall, and By the Butcher's Stall.

The settlement grew because of immigration. The inhabitants of Gorizia originated from its environs, yet there were also newcomers from western Romanesque regions and Germans who settled in from the north. The Slovene origins of the inhabitants were discernible from lists of the mediaeval population of the province of Gorizia (drafted by Franc Kos). However, such a method of determining the origins is not very reliable; it is easier to determine the social structure. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Italian aristocratic families settled there (Rabatta, Attems, Orzone). Later on they played an important role in the history of Gorizia. German settlers came mostly in search of work with the Counts (as ministerials and officials).

Near the market town of Gorizia, which was surrounded by a wall, there was a village, usually denoted as *villa*, *suburbium* or Lower Gorizia (*vnnder Görcz*). Between 1305 and 1473 it was mentioned in documents eighteen times. There were streets and a square called Lower Square, in the village as well. Part of the village was called Grabn (*graben*; a 'ditch' or 'ravine'). There was also a Franciscan monastery that was first mentioned in documents in 1303 (there were further records of it from 1321, 1322, 1342, 1356, 1363, 1398 and 1399). In the fourteenth century there were records of the small (1325) and the great church (1351) and of two graveyards by them. The great one was consecrated to St. Hilary and Tatian, and it was the predecessor of the present cathedral in Gorizia. The village was smaller than the borough with gardens, vineyards and fields around the houses. A road led from the village to the mills on the river Soča. Parts of the village were called the Wegschayd, Tanela, Babul and Balol.

Travnik Square ('meadow'), now the centre of Gorizia, was located in the suburbs at that time, sometimes being denoted as *Anger* (1341) or *Traunich* (1519). There were records of the present quarter of Podturn (*sub turri*) in 1387, the ferry-boat on the Soča (about 1341), the brook Koren with its mills (1319) and several more distant places like Rafut (*Rafaldt* in 1471), Stara Gora (*Alten perg* in 1387), Liškur (1398) and others that cannot be identified (*Rennweg*, *Olbart*, *Škofija*).

The development of Gorizia as a place with civic deeds since 1455 had depended on its administrative and political functions and also on its economy, especially crafts and trade. It was a trading centre for the north (the Soča valley), east (the Vipava valley) and west (Friuli). Yet the trading routes from the north were not of equal importance as those through Friuli and the Kanal valley. On account of that the power of the Friulian towns grew. The crafts of Gorizia deteriorated with a reduction of the garrison after the decline of the Counts of Gorizia, since soldiers used to be the greatest consumers of products and services. The removal of the Counts of Gorizia to their new seat in Lienz in Austria (Bruck Castle) had not saved the dynasty either. One of the medieval characteristics of Gorizia was that the town was the residence of feudal lords who had their estates in the countryside. Agriculture had remained the main branch of the economy of the region along the river Soča. There are no statistical data about the population of the Province of Gorizia during the Middle Ages. Franc Kos compared the number of houses and the inhabitants in the area around

the castle of Gorizia about the year 1900 and discovered that over 511 people lived in 41 dwellings. His conjecture based on that data was that the quarter had been more populated during the Middle Ages.

The course of the walls surrounding the town is another matter of speculation for the researchers of the history of Gorizia. The walls recorded in 1307 were not town walls but borough walls. The walls with the moat were mentioned in documents in 1329, 1365 and 1398. The formulation *murus civitatis Goriciae* appeared in a document from 1471, without indication of whether the walls had included both parts of Gorizia, already joined at that time.

The history of Gorizia was bound to the rise and fall of power of the Counts of Gorizia; yet the image of the surroundings was somewhat different. The possession was divided among several feudal lords, secular and ecclesiastic. The Patriarchate of Aquileia predominated among the latter; there were powerful monasteries in Rožac, Možac and Monaster near Aquileia. Among the former were the Lords of Rihemberg, Dornberg and Devin, apart from the Counts of Gorizia. The agricultural economy experienced several crises, which resulted in abandoned farms (natural disasters, diseases, Turkish incursions) and drift from the land. In the Middle Ages the frontier of the language was established as well: the territory between the boundary of the Friuli plains, the sea from Štivan to Trieste, stretching as far as the Julian Alps and the Karst passages in the east, was settled by the Slovenes.

During the Middle Ages Gorizia was the only urban centre in the region of the river Soča. On the estates of the Patriarchate of Aquileia in the lower Soča valley some urban settlements started to develop. Gradišče by the Soča developed from a fortification at the end of the fifteenth century into the centre of the estates of the Lords of Eggenberg (1647–1717). Monfalcone, the stumbling block for the Patriarchs of Aquileia and the Counts of Gorizia on account of its toll-houses, devolved to the Venetians in 1420. Grado had been a centre of Church authority since the early Middle Ages. The Patriarch there was in constant conflict with Aquileia, and in 1482 he moved his seat to Venice. Cervignano and Cormons, where the Patriarchs of Aquileia used to have their seat, developed into larger settlements. In those areas of the Soča region which were densely populated with the Slovenes, Sv. Križ was the only place that was granted civic deeds in 1532.

After the death of the last Count of Gorizia the fights for his inheritance began between the Habsburgs and the Republic of Venice, the Habsburgs eventually inheriting their possessions. The estates in the Soča region were united into an administrative entity that obtained its final form in the middle of the eighteenth century as the Province of Gorizia and Gradisca, the regions of Bovec and Tolmin being added to it before then.

Branko Marušič