

## THE ROOTS OF WRITTEN RESIAN

Narečno osnovo starih pisnih besedil v rezijanščini določamo s fonetičnega in fonološkega stališča. Na podlagi opravljene analize je bila izoblikovana delovna hipoteza, ki omogoča nadaljnje preučevanje rezijanske knjižne tradicije.

The dialect base of older Resian written texts is established from a phonetic/phonological point of view. The result of the analysis is a working hypothesis for further study on the question of a Resian standard tradition.

### 1 Introduction

Writing in Resian is not an occupation of a relatively recent origin. The oldest texts go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This early Resian literature shares some superficial similarities with medieval Slovene literature. Its contents are exclusively religious and the authors are not always native speakers. For Resian, this period ends in 1930, the year in which the first secular text was published (see Matičetov 1965–1967).

True, also before 1930, a huge quantity of secular Resian texts was produced and published, but in these cases the primary interest of the author/editor was dialectological and the target audience was non-Resian. This not only holds for Baudouin de Courtenay's *Resian Texts* (BdC 1895), but also for minor publications such as *The Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Riva 1966), for which it cannot be excluded that it was especially written for the ethnological survey of the year 1811, and the word list composed by Odorico Buttolo in 1818 in response to a request by the Italian scholar Girolamo Asquini (Matičetov – Perusini 1955–1956: 80, 84–86). In order for a text to belong to the corpus of early Resian literature, its author's intent must have been to convey a message to a Resian audience in their native tongue.

The present article shall focus only on one of the many aspects of the study, i.e. what dialect base is reflected by the language used in these texts? Such an analysis can only be performed on texts that have not been filtered by interpreting

transcriptions, which excludes the *Stabat mater* published in 1862<sup>1</sup> and a Bible fragment published by Caf in 1852.<sup>2</sup> The object of our study is thus reduced to only five texts. This analysis, which will be based on phonetic/phonological characteristics, will permit us to formulate a working hypothesis for future research on the question of a literary tradition in Resia.

## 2 *Rez'janskij katicizis I, II*

The texts transcribed and first published by Baudouin de Courtenay in 1875 are actually two independent manuscripts, of which only the second one has a title of its own: *Libri od, lvzi nebesche*.<sup>3</sup> At least for the first manuscript it can be ascertained that it must have circulated in Resia in more than one copy. This can be deduced from the fact that the Resian fragments contained in Kopitar 1816 are almost exactly similar in their wording to stretches of text in BdC's manuscript I (Matičeto 1964: 124). These fragments derive from the manuscript entitled *Cra[t]ka Dottrina cristian[s]ca* which was given to Jan Potocki by two Resian priests during his stay in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In BdC's copy, the main body of the text has the title *Dottrina od Jeshusa Cristusha*. Potocki's copy was donated to the library of Count Ossoliński and its present whereabouts are unknown. The same holds for BdC's copies.

The manuscript II is datable for its time of copying (1797) and for its time of writing (after 1700). The manuscript I may also have been copied in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but its time of writing must have preceded manuscript II, as the former contains some morphological archaisms that lack in the latter. Apart from some orthographical conventions, there seem to be no further differences between the language used in both fragments and therefore we will here follow Baudouin de Courtenay and treat them together.

As noted by the editor (BdC 1875b: 26), the manuscripts rather faithfully reflect the local dialect of Gniva as he knew it. The main exception to this statement are the reflexes of the historically short accented final \**i* and \**u* in these texts, that appear as low middle vowels in the modern dialect, e.g. *huspudèn* 'lord', *prusèt* 'to pray', 1-ptc mpl *paršlè* 'to come', Dsg *učè* 'father', Gplm *njèh* 'he'; *kròh* 'bread', *čòt* 'to hear', Dsg *žwutò* 'body', Dsgm *njimò* 'he'. The manuscripts, however, consequently show high vowels (*hospudin* I.1, *prusit* II.13, 1-ptc msg *parsli* II.7, Dsg *Vgi* II.11 Gplm *gnich* II.15; *cruh* I.4, *zut* I.3, Dsg *svottù* I.4, Dsgm *gnimu* II.11,

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. the negative judgement on the quality of the publication in BdC 1875a: VIII–IX.

<sup>2</sup> With regards to Caf's transcription of two Resian songs, MATIČETOV (1981–1983: 241) notices that the Slovene linguist tended to etymologise. This is a pity as the Bible fragment is a translation by Odorico Buttolo (PSBL 3: 160).

<sup>3</sup> Later published in BAUDOUIN DE COURTENAY 1895: 445–474, with corrections and clarifications to the original transcription (BdC 1895: 645–659), and in BAUDOUIN DE COURTENAY 1894, using a normalised orthography.

II.13). This lead Baudouin de Courtenay (1875b: 26) to assume that these high vowels were restored by the author because of alternating forms containing high vowels and because of correspondences to the local dialect of San Giorgio that has maintained these high vowels until the present day. This would thus prove that the author envisaged a literary language that was not narrowly based on a specific dialect.

Yet, another and simpler explanation is possible. The texts may reflect the local dialect of Gniva at a time in which these high vowels still had a high quality. The restoration has been carried out without a single exception and also encompasses forms that do not participate in alternations. In the case of Dsg *Vgi*, *svottù* one could think of analogy to the unaccented Dsg desinences *-i*, *-u*, e.g. *dusi* 'soul', *zlovechv* 'man'. But with such forms as *iust* 'correct' II.7, *tù* 'there' I.3, I.4 and *uvn* 'up' I.3, I.6 neither alternating forms nor analogy come into consideration. This feat can therefore only have been accomplished by a person of extreme consequence and with a sound comparative insight. As to the justified attribution of the latter quality, no statement can be made, but the highly varying spelling casts doubts on the degree of consequence of the author. Furthermore, if the author had wanted to remove specific dialect traits from the literary language, one wonders why such exclusive Gniva forms like *vac* 'more' and *ëruw* 'pertaining to a priest' were maintained and not replaced by the more general Resian forms *vèc* and *jëruw*.

The language used in these manuscripts is thus the local dialect of Gniva at an older stage of its historical development. The author must have been a native speaker of this dialect as apart from innumerable Romance loans no influence of other language varieties can be detected.

### 3 *Passio Domini ec.*

The linguistic assignment of the next text, *Passio Domini ec.*, is everything but straightforward. It is an Easter sermon that was transcribed and first published by Merkù in 1975, accompanied by a translation in Italian.<sup>4</sup> Merkù found the text in the archives of the San Leonardo al Natisone parish, where the document probably still is. The language is heavily mixed with non-Resian elements, which makes it rather unlikely that the author was a native speaker of Resian. Merkù assumes that it must have been a priest originating from the Natisone valleys and dates the manuscript somewhere between 1830 and 1848. According to Matičetov (in a personal communication), the author may well have been Valentin Bledigh, a chaplain who served in Resia under Odorico Buttolo and a native from the Natisone region.

That it was the author's intention to produce a Resian text can be deduced from exclusively Resian traits, such as the final *-t* in the infinitives *itet* 'to go', *nestet* 'to carry' and *reget* 'to say' and the initial *i-* in *iti* 'that', *isi* 'this', *isde* 'here', *istes*

<sup>4</sup>Part of the text is also to be found in MERKÙ 1978b: 99–100, with minor differences in the transcription.

'same', *itako* 'thus' and *igna* 'now'. These stand out among a host of non-Resian forms that are typical of the Natisone dialects or even for the Central Slovene literary language of the period. The examples encompass the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural desinence *-te* in *morete* 'to be able', *snate* 'to know', *pridite* 'to come' against only one proper Resian *-ta* in *teita* 'to want', the final *-m* in Dplm *im* 'he' pre1sg *cem* 'to want', *morem* 'to be able', *prosim* 'to pray', *sam* 'to be', *vidim* 'to see', Isg *Christusam* 'Christ', *sarzam* 'heart', but also more rarely *-n*, e.g. Dplm *in*, pre1sg *gren* 'to go', *gien* 'to want', Isg *krisan* 'cross', *quantan* 'dress'. Furthermore, the long infinitive *-ti* in *dati* 'to give', *bati* 'to fear', *tresti* 'to shake', *biti* 'to be', *pasti* 'to fall', *prostiti* 'to pray', *posnati* 'to recognise', *dilati* 'to do' against the correct Resian short infinitive *busnit* 'to kiss', *soportat* 'to endure', *l* in forms like *sapliuan* 'to spit', *sapluuagne* 'spitting', *semlo* 'earth', *sdraula* 'sane spot', *srepli* 'nail' instead of Resian and Littoral Slovene *j* like in *pejajo* 'to lead', *parpejejo* 'to lead by', *semio*, *srebje*, the possessive pronouns Nsgm *mui* 'my', Nsgf *toja* 'your', Gsgm *mojga*, *toiga*, *soiga* 'his', Asgf *mojo*, Isgn *moim* and the superlative prefix *nar-* in *nar buje*, *nar buischi* 'best', *nar vinzhi*, *nar vagh* 'most', to mention only the most systematic deviations from Resian.

If then, because of the presence of the exclusively Resian forms mentioned earlier, one still wants to determine exactly which local dialect is reflected in the manuscript, one is likewise confronted with a mixture of indicators. In the light of the strong non-Resian character of the text, one cannot simply rely on the reflexes that are normally adduced to distinguish between the local dialects, as they might just as well be attributed to the influence of the Natisone dialects. This holds for the vocalisation in *a* in *smart* 'death', *sarze* 'heart', *uart* 'garden' (cfr. Logar 1996a: 149), the preserved opposition *\*g* ↔ *\*h* in Asg *Gospuda* 'Lord', *Boga* 'God', Asgf *drugo* 'other' against Ipln *sughimi* 'dry', *gnih* 'their' and the final fricative in *Bugh* 'God' (cfr. Logar 1996b: 255, 257–258), the absence of pretonic vowel raising (cfr. Logar 1996a: 149–150) in *besida* 'word', Ipl *ozhmi* 'eye', imp2sg *poidi* 'to come', pre3sg *poslusa* 'to listen', Dsgm *gnemu* 'he' or the indeclinable relative pronoun *ki* 'who, which' (cfr. nad. *k'í* BdC 1988: 148). Confronted with such a situation, the dialectologist is practically disarmed. In my opinion, the only tiny piece of evidence that points towards a specific local Resian dialect is the repeatedly used comparative adverb *vagh* 'more', exclusive to the dialect of Gniva (cfr. nad. 'vič' Logar 1996b: 256). This said, one could assume that the author, obviously not very closely acquainted with spoken Resian, knew this form from a Resian manuscript written in the local dialect of Gniva. If this is true, then the combination within the same text of the vocalisation in *a* for syllabic *\*r* and in *o* for syllabic *\*l* in Npl *solze* 'tear' could be secondary proof for Gniva as the rather obscured dialect base. The traits that speak against this assumption would then have been caused by a more unconscious than conscious attempt to arrive at a more broadly based literary language.

#### 4 *Christjanske uzhilo*

This is by far the bulkiest Resian text in our corpus, consisting of 95 pages in octave format. The original manuscript was a gift to Baudouin de Courtenay. He published a transcription of it in 1913 and probably lost the original as he moved from St.Petersburg to Warsaw in the revolution year 1917.<sup>5</sup> The manuscript contains a series of lectures on the official Catholic catechism that were written and held during the years 1845 and 1850. The identity of the author is unknown although some Resians told Baudouin that it may have been *don* Francesco Galizia, a native Friulian who worked in Resia from 1843 until 1869 (BdC 1913: 113).

Although this text certainly presents a more uniform language that is closer to Resian than the previously discussed text, it is not completely free from non-Resians forms.<sup>6</sup> Incidentally occurring forms that can only have been produced by a non-native are NApl *déla* 'deed' 10, 18 instead of the correct form *díla* 27, imp2sg *bódei* 'to be' 2 instead of *bódi* 14, 15, 18 and NAsg *shink* 'present' 31 that sports the vocalism of the oblique forms. In one case, the author corrected such an erroneous form by cancelling Nsgf *dujá* 'wild' 25 and replacing it by *duji* 25 (which is an indeclinable adjective). One gets the general impression that errors of this kind become less frequent as the manuscript continues as if the author improved his knowledge of the dialect during the process. As to the native language of the author, errors that reveal a non-Slovene background are rare. Here one could adduce imp2sg *bódei*, *ostáneí* 'to stay' 27 and *proséy* 'to pray' 24, but it should be added that these are used as conjunctives, which is very uncommon in Slovene grammar. Therefore, these errors could have been produced by a native speaker of Slovene as well. Probably, his native language was a dialect from the Natisone valleys, as the vocalism in *delézh* 'far' 22 (cfr. nad. *de'leč* Logar 1996b: 256, but res. *dalëč*), *skuóse* 'by means of' 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 (cfr. nad. *skuózi* BdC 1988: 150, but res. *skúza*), *torók* 'Tuesday' 23 (cfr. nad. *to'rak* Logar 1996b: 256, but res. *taròk*) and Lsg *vizhérji* 'dinner' 19, 20, 21, 23, 28 (cfr. nad. *vičè:rja* Logar 1996a: 150, but res. *vačérja*) points in that direction.

The language of the manuscript then is mainly Resian, but it does not unequivocally display all and only those traits of a specific dialect. The reflex of the short accented \**schwa* as *a*, e.g. *dan* 'one' 8, 12, 24, 31, *nas* 'today' 4, 7, 8, 17, 1-ptc msg *parshál* 'to come' 15, *vas* 'all' 20, 21, the vocalisation of the syllabic \**l* as *ól*, e.g. Dplm *bólnin* 'ill' 23, 24, *dólsan* 'obliged' 12, 14, and the cancelled opposition \**g* ↔ \**h*, e.g. GAsg *Bóha* 'God' 31, Apl *hríhe* 'sin' 30 ↔ Gsg *krúha* 'bread' 30, *huálit* 'to praise' 30 make the Gniva dialect the most probable candidate for the dialect base of the text. What speaks against this assumption is the consequent absence of pretonic vowel raising, e.g. *besída* 'word' 3, pre1sg *se bojin* 'to fear' 1,

<sup>5</sup> For a publication accompanied by an Italian translation, see *Pieve di S. Maria Assunta* 1984.

<sup>6</sup> The following analysis is based on the first 33 pages of the complete text.

*poslúshat* 'to listen' 2, Npl *norústva* 'idiocy' 3, and the almost exclusively used form *ki* for the indeclinable relative pronoun. Incidentally, the same distribution was found in the manuscript discussed previously, there interpreted as possible Natisone elements. Further deviations from Gniva forms are bound up with variation. They involve the following:

1) in a restricted set of items \**g* is apparently conserved, cfr. *Gospodén* 'Lord' 21, 30 etc., *Góspud* 'Lord' 19, 26, 27, GAsg *nikógor* 'nobody' 14 without variation and *ciastíg* 31/*chiastíh* 'chastisement' 31, *grázhia* 16 etc./Asg *hrázhio* 'grace' 13, *spiegát* 3, 14, 19, 22/*spiehât* 'to explain' 13 with variation. In the last two cases, the form with *h* is decidedly more rare;

2) the vocalisation for syllabic \**r* is *e* rather than *a* in the lexeme *pérvi* 'first' 8, ecc., for which only once Lplm *párveh* 19 is to be read. Other forms with *e* are *pert* 'part' 14 alongside *part* 3, pre3sg *terpj* 'to suffer' 6 alongside pre3pl *tarpijo* 30 and Lsg *vértu* 'garden' 31;

3) \*-*aj* reflects as *-ej* rather than *-aj* in the lexeme *itadéi* 'then' 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and in the superlative prefix \**naj-*, e.g. *nei bojé* 18, 22, *néi búishi* 'best' 24, *néi vinzhi* 'most' 23. Furthermore, also in the imp2sg forms *ciastiéi* 'to chastise' 30, *degnéj* 'to be worthy' 32, *perdonéi* 'to pardon' 30, *pomáhei* 'to help' 5, 27, 31 and *sdéllei* 'to do' 32.

In these cases, one gets the impression that the deviation from the Gniva forms is restricted to certain lexemes and morphological categories. These deviations thus could represent an orthographical convention rather than an actual dialect pronunciation.

The last main deviation to be mentioned are the reflexes of the historically short accented final \**i* and \**ù*. Again, in a case like *rezhít* 'to say' 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 the high vowel seems to originate from a writing convention, cfr. *itét* 'to go' 19, 27, *parnestét* 'to bring' 9, *prelomét* 'to break' 18, *prosét* 'to pray' 24, 26, 27, *romonét* 'to talk' 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18, 19, 24, 28, *saupét* 'to cry out' 22, *sdrobét* 'to crumble' 5, *ulét* 'to pour in' 14. A high vowel is mostly written when in absolutely final position, cfr. Dsg *otrokú* 'child' 18, *Ozhì* 'Father' 28, 29, 30, 32, Dsgm *gnemú* 'he' 27, 31, *itomù* 'that' 5, 10, 21, 1-ptc mpl *mashalí* 'to be obliged' 2, *mohlì* 'to be able' 4, 22, *preslì* 'to pass' 19, *reklì* 'to say' 26, 27. Note that these forms all involve a desinence. Exceptions to this distribution rule are rare: Dsg *shuotó* 'body' 24, Dsgm *itomó* 3, 16, 26 and furthermore *itó* 'there' 24, 32 on the one hand, and *otrozhíz* 'baby' 13, 14, *riskrít* 'to uncover' 4 and *zhut* 'to hear' 8 on the other.

This distribution could be accounted for in two ways: firstly, it represents the dialect pronunciation of the period in which the manuscript was written or, secondly, it is the result of normalisation carried out by the author, much along the lines suggested by Baudouin de Courtenay for the exclusive appearance of high vowels in the *Rez'janskij katichizis* manuscripts. The latter possibility can be

verified with the same criteria that were used there in order to reject it. Within the *Christjanske uzhilo* manuscript, we now do have variation and the »restoration« has not been carried through in lexemes without alternating forms, viz. *itó* 'there' and *fes* 'really' 8, 21, *uon* 'up' 32. As regards exclusively Gniva lexemes, also here *vazh* 'more' 9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 22, 26, 27 occurs, but now the initial *j-* found in other Resian local dialects appears instead of the Gniva form *ëru* 'priest': *Iéru* 13, 21, 25, 32. Therefore, normalisation is not to be ruled out as a possible explanation.

I assume that the language of this manuscript is firmly based on the Gniva dialect and was written down by a person who tried to strike a balance between the actually spoken dialect while striving to eliminate some of its most individual features, notably pretonic vowel raising and the lowering of final *\*i* and *\*ù*. The reason for this normalisation may just as well have been the vowel correspondences within Resian as those with his own native dialect of Natisone.

### 5 To kristjanske učilo po rozoanskeh

The fifth and last text to be treated is not a manuscript but a published book written by the cleric Giuseppe Cramaro who served in the parish of Oseacco from 1923 until 1933 (Kramaro 1927). Again, he was not a native Resian, but from Platischis in the neighbouring Torre area, and first had to learn the dialect on the spot. The Catechism is taught and explained on 54 pages in small octave, some with illustrations. Cramaro did not translate independently as he had the linguistic assistance of Anton Kacin, a teacher of Slovene at the *Malo semenišče* in Gorizia (Matičeto 2001: 55). Apart from Cramaro, Valentin Birtig, Cramaro's successor at Oseacco, used the booklet during pastoral work (Matičeto in a personal communication).

The phonetic/phonological characteristics of this text have been perfectly covered by Ramovš's review (Ramovš 1928). The orthography is not very consistent but still conveys some reflexes typical of the local dialect of Oseacco, e.g. *\*j*, *\*lj* →  $\emptyset$  like in 1-ptc mpl *paali* 16, 17/ppp Nplm *pejani* 'to lead' 21 and *\*-l* → syllabic *u* like in *doužnost* 45/Apl *dolžnosti* 'obligation' 33, 41. The rarely used non-Resian Gpl desinence *-e* in *kristianè* 'Christian' 4 reveals the native dialect of the author – a native speaker of either the *tersko* or northern *goriško* dialects.

The reason for the adoption of the Oseacco dialect seems straightforward: the author worked in the parish of Oseacco and that is where he learned Resian. He surely was acquainted with the main prayers in their Resian wording, but it remains a matter of future study whether he learned about them only from the oral or also from the written tradition. In any case, he did not shun sharp deviations from that tradition, as the following example may illustrate: although all known Resian versions of the Lord's Prayer have plural courtesy forms when referring to God, Cramaro decided to follow general Slovene usage and introduced singular forms in his text (Cramaro 1927: 5–6; Longhino 1984: 16). Probably because of such clashes

with local usage, his booklet did not gain much esteem among the local population (Merkù 1978a: 48).

## 6 Conclusion

All the texts, except for the last, are in some way related to the Gniva dialect. Apart from the *Rez'janskij katichizis* manuscripts, they have all been produced by non-natives, probably originating from *Beneška Slovenija*. These findings leave room for the hypothesis that an identifiable tradition of writing in Resian did exist although it was not necessarily carried on by Resians.

However, further research is called for along the following lines: firstly, who exactly were these non-natives and where exactly did they work in Resia? After all, if their choice of the dialect base was simply determined by their place of work, like in Cramaro's case, nothing has been proven. Therefore, secondly, the orthographic and lexical peculiarities of our texts should be analysed. A study of the lexicon in particular could elucidate not only the relations of the Gniva based texts among themselves, but also the exact position of the Oseacco based booklet of Cramaro.

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## KORENINE KNJIŽNE REZIJANŠČINE

### POVZETEK

Osrednja zbirka starejše književnosti v rezijanščini zajema pet religioznih besedil, zapisanih med koncem 17. stoletja in letom 1927. Filološko študijo omenjenih besedil močno ovira dejstvo, da je bil zaenkrat najden izvirnik le enega besedila, in sicer *Passio Domini ec.*

Analiza jezika, uporabljenega v besedilih, je razkrila naslednje narečne značilnosti:

1. Besedili *Rez'janskij katicizis I, II* očitno temeljita na narečju kraja Gniva, pa čeprav kažeta starejšo stopnjo zgodovinskega razvoja narečja. Avtor besedil je bil rojeni govorec omenjenega narečja.

2. V besedilu *Passio Domini ec.* je veliko nerezijanskih primesi, kar kaže, da je besedilo zapisal avtor, čigar narečje govorijo v porečju Nadiže. Jasnih namigov na rezijansko narečje je le nekaj, po vsej verjetnosti pa gre za narečje kraja Gniva.

3. *Christjanske uzhilo* je že precej bližje rezijanščini, čeprav v njem zasledimo nekaj nerezijanskih elementov, ki ponovno nakazujejo, da je avtor besedila iz porečja Nadiže. Rezijanski elementi naj bi temeljili na narečju kraja Gniva.

4. *Kristjanske učilo po rozoanskeh* temelji na narečju kraja Oseacco, kljub temu pa besedilo kaže več narečnih nedoslednosti. Avtor besedila je rojeni govorec sosednjega narečja, ki ga govorijo v okolici kraja Torre.

V rezijanščini so torej v glavnem pisali Nerezijani, ki so se narečja naučili v sami Reziji. Z vprašanjem, kateri dejavniki so vplivali na izbiro narečne osnove, se morajo ukvarjati prihodnje študije. Ali so se nerojeni govorniki odločali za narečje, ki so ga najbolj poznali, ali pa sta besedili *Rez'janskij katicizis I, II* predstavljali del knjižne tradicije? Če je slednja hipoteza pravilna, zakaj je avtor *Kristjanske učilo po rozoanskeh* prekinil z omenjeno tradicijo?