

Nation-State and Cultural Diversity in Italy

Due to the peculiar history of the Apennine Peninsula and the late Unification, the formation of the Italian nation-state has not reduced important regional differences in the economic, cultural and political fields. The north-south division – defined as ‘the southern question’ – an economic ‘gap’ between north and south, has a great impact on culture and politics. It appeared soon after Unification and has not been resolved after more than 150 years. Internal migration has produced important population shifts: southern Italians in northern Italy have often been the victims of discrimination and widespread hostility by the native population. Small territorial and linguistic minorities have also maintained their specificities in different regional areas both in the north and the south of the country. A former country of emigration, Italy has become the destination of new migratory movements from Africa, Asia and eastern Europe from the mid-1970s onwards.

Migration movements first affected northern Italy, with the great emigration of 1861, above all to the American continent. From the 1880s onwards the south was also affected, when emigration became a mass phenomenon. Between 1870 and 1971, 26 million Italians left Italy, which is practically half of the Italian population (57,679,955 people lived in Italy in 2000).¹ In 1995, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were 58.5 million people of Italian origin in the world; in 2000, according to the same ministry, the number was between 60 million and 70 million.² Historical memory forgets this important phenomenon: an analysis of the actual impact of the Italian emigration has not yet been carried out.

Over the last three decades, the arrival of a large number of immigrant populations from different parts of the globe has

turned Italy into a country of immigration, with around 1.5 million immigrant residents. Historical and cultural differences inside Italy have been dealt with in different ways according to the historical period. Italian nation-building during the Risorgimento pushed for cultural and linguistic unity. Fascism tried to impose a strongly centralised state, persecuting linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities. The Republic, whose constitution mentions the protection of minorities, has failed to recognise diversity and the autonomous regions. The new phenomenon of immigration has not been considered a chance for developing the cultural pluralism and thinking to a new 'multicultural' or 'intercultural' society: the reaction has been the defence of 'mono-culturalism', both at the national and local levels. This has become particularly evident in the last two years, with the coming to power of openly xenophobic and nationalist parties (Northern League and National Alliance).

Nation-state building process

From ancient times, pre-Indo-European traditions were represented by pre-Latin cultures, among which the most famous was the Etruscan. This culture left a great number of vestiges mostly in the central part of the country.³ While the Greeks settled in the south and in Sicily, and the Celts in the North, the Romans started their expansion from the centre of the country. They attached a great importance to the linguistic and cultural development of the country, Latin becoming the language of the whole peninsula. In the latest period of the Roman Empire, the arrivals of Germanic tribes (Longobards, Goths, Vandals, Franks, Suebi, etc.), pushed by the migratory waves of several Asiatic peoples headed by the Huns, left noticeable traces in the development of the future Italian language and culture. One of the most important tribes to settle in Italy were the Longobards. In 568 they founded a kingdom in today's Lombardy, which was overthrown by Charlemagne in 774.

During the Middle Ages, first the Arabs (also called Saracens or Moors)⁴ and then the Normans occupied Sicily. The rest of Italy was a part of the German-Roman Empire, and regularly crossed by German Emperors, their armies and courts. From the thirteenth century onwards, the German, French and Spanish had a constant presence in Italy, which was divided into regions and towns. This division continued even when other European countries such as Spain, France and Great Britain became unitarian nation-states. Because of the late unification, regional and local differences subsisted within a common cultural and linguistic area, marked by the use of Tuscan as the literary and bureaucratic language. Within these different realities, the establishment of minorities was the consequence of migration waves from other countries, mainly the Balkans.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans caused groups of populations to flee Albania, Greece and Croatia. Albanian, Croatian and Greek immigrants landed on the southern shores of the country. These populations contributed to the culture of southern Italian regions over the centuries, maintaining their language and customs. Italy recorded the first arrivals of Roma and Sinti in the fifteenth century. The historical Roma, currently inhabiting southern Italy, arrived as a part of the above mentioned more general migratory flows coming from the Balkans, whilst the Sinti probably arrived from central Europe, mainly from German-speaking countries.

The Unification of Italy was the result of the well-known nation-building process and socio-political movement, known as the 'Risorgimento', a word that means 'resurrection, revival, renewal'. Here we rehearse some aspects of the Risorgimento, particularly as far as the projects of the future Italy are concerned. The position of the minorities depended in fact by this vision. The period of the Risorgimento lasted around sixty years, from the beginning of the nineteenth century until 1861. In fact, Italy became an unitarian country on 7 March 1861 (*Unità d'Italia*), by force of an executive law which established Vittorio Emanuele II,

former King of Piedmont, King of Italy 'for the Grace of God and the Will of the Nation'.

The roots of the Risorgimento lie in the eighteenth century Italian culture, in the works of people like Ludovico Antonio Muratori⁵ or Vittorio Alfieri.⁶ However, it was during the period dominated by Napoleon I that the idea of a possible unification of the country was encouraged by the temporary expulsion of the Austrian and other repressive regimes and by the establishment of new states in Italy, such as the Cisalpine Republic (created in 1797). When the Vienna Congress restored the old order in 1815, a movement of secret societies (such as the *Carbonari*) appeared and carried on revolutionary activities, engineering uprisings in 1820, 1821, 1831. In 1848, the King of Piedmont, who became a key actor of the Risorgimento process, supported the uprisings against Austrian rule.

Different components of the Italian population, intellectual, middle-classes, and the nobility took part in the nation-building process. The peasantry remained mostly indifferent to the Risorgimento. However, during the biennium 1848-49, which marked the apex of the liberal revolutionary movement all over Europe, all classes took part, including lower classes. The Risorgimento not only aimed at the unification of Italy under one government, but also at the renewal of the Italian society and people beyond purely political aims. There was a common agreement among the supporters of the Risorgimento on freedom from foreign control, liberalism (the actors of the Risorgimento were called 'liberal'), constitutionalism, i.e. constitutional guarantees of personal liberties and rights. The main leaders of the Risorgimento, however, disagreed about the final settlement of the future Italian State.

The main positions were as follows: Giuseppe Mazzini and the followers of his organisation 'Giovine Italia' (Young Italy) supported the project of a democratic and people's unitary republic; Vincenzo Gioberti promoted a sort of 'Neo-Guelphism' struggling for a confederation of Italian States headed by the Pope; Carlo Cattaneo, a very interesting thinker, opted for a federation of republics considering that centralisation would

sacrifice the autonomy of the towns and regions, damaging in particular poor areas of the south. Others finally saw the solution in an unification by the Savoy monarchy, the dynasty of Piedmont-Sardinia. After the defeat of the Italian insurgency in 1848–49, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour and prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, was diplomatically very active in promoting the idea of a united Italy under the House of Savoy which had gone to war in defense of the Lombardy rebels in 1848.

The House of Savoy gained prestige in this war because of his constitutional choices. Piedmont-Sardinia had become the only Italian State with a constitutional and elected parliament after 1849 (on the basis of the *Statuto Albertino*, see 1.2.4.). The Albertino Statute is important because it recognised religious minorities' right to exist and because it established Italian instead of French as the language of Piedmont-Sardinia. The leadership of the Piedmont and the Savoy dynasty exerted a powerful attraction on Italian nationalists in various movements. Moreover, even conservative forces began considering that an Italy united under the Savoy monarchy would provide an element of stability against the risk of revolutionary uprisings. A new consensus emerged among all nationalist elements, except for Mazzini's followers and democrats alike, who continued to believe in a popular revolution.

Different views of Italy's future were developing along two opposite lines: on the one hand, the option was seen in terms of a monarchy or republic, and on the other in terms of a federation or centralised state. "All the Italian political writers [of the Risorgimento] hoped for Italy's independence from foreigners, and for that reason they wanted their writings to educate the Italian people [...]" (Bernardini: n.d., 2). These differences remained even after the unification process had been completed. Carlo Cattaneo, for example, went to Naples with Garibaldi in 1860 during the conquest of the south, but he left when he realised that the implementation of the federalist programme was not possible. Cattaneo was also elected to the Italian Parliament, but never sat since he refused to swear allegiance to the Crown, remaining faithful to the Republican ideal.

Giuseppe Mazzini

One of the main actors of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Mazzini, supported both the republican and European dimension of the new Italy. He imagined a future Italian State as an unitarian, democratic and popular republic, independent and free from any foreign domination. According to him, this goal could be reached through a popular revolution. Mazzini founded 'Giovine Italia' (Young Italy) in July 1831 in Marseilles. The movement's name showed its orientation towards the youthful revolutionary enthusiasm for national unification. The movement followed Mazzini's political-spiritual programme, inspired by republican principles: equality and brotherhood among all citizens, namely members of one nation; subversion of the social order; abolition of the monarchy (considered a threat to citizens' equality and freedom); improvement of the social system; a republican state model, the only one that could guarantee the implementation of such ideas. Mazzini believed in a direct bond between 'God' and 'people': God dictates his own will of a state order through the people. According to Mazzini, religion, democracy and nation were 'a whole'. However, his vision of the world was not nationalist, since it was necessary to repudiate the predominance of one nation upon another and to contribute to pacificism throughout mankind. Besides being a revolutionary programme for Italy, Mazzini's ideas led him beyond his own nation – towards Europe. He actually imagined a united Europe, creating another movement, 'Giovine Europa' (Young Europe, 1834). Italy could really realise its own destiny in the United States of Europe.

Mazzini was guided by the idea that "every nation has a mission of its own [and to Italy] he gave the mission of inspiring the liberation movement of all European peoples: [thus] it should not be a politico-military power but rather a beacon of solidarity and freedom. In this sense, he could say that he loved his own homeland because he loved all homelands [...]" (Tozzi: n.d., 4). Consisting of four organisations, 'Giovine Italia', 'Giovine Germania', 'Giovine Polonia' and 'Giovine Svizzera', the movement had as its founding goal to "lead all the peoples towards the

liberating insurrection, after which, overthrowing the governments, they would be recognised as brothers.” (ibid. 4). “The project was however [...] too ambitious to actually bear fruit” (ibid. 6).

Mazzini paid attention to the link between nation and education. He did not see the educational environment as academic and bookish. On the contrary, “his formula ‘thought and action’ aimed precisely at underlining the connection between moral maturity and involvement in the struggle, while condemning exclusively intellectual culture.” (ibid. 4) In this sense, he pleaded for ‘the education and the formation of a new people’s consciousness as an indispensable premise to any action.’ Thus, apart from its mainly revolutionary role, ‘Giovine Italia’ defined its role as essentially educational. Regardless of his defeat – the unification of the Italian State was achieved under the guidance of the Savoy – the figure of Mazzini played a significant role in the Italian Risorgimento, uniting different social classes and suggesting the importance of the European dimension in any national movement.

Lo Statuto Albertino (1848)

The Statuto Albertino (Albertino Statute) was the constitution of the state of Piedmont-Sardinia. The Savoy dynasty promoted the Unification of Italy and supported the rebels in regions occupied by the Austrians. The Albertino Statute was issued on 4 March 1848, as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Sardinia and Italy (Regno di Sardegna e Regno d’Italia). It was created ‘for the grace of God and the King of Sardinia, of Cyprus and of Jerusalem’. It represented a fundamental legislative regulation of a monarchical character which, in a way, mentioned the juridical position of the national religion and language. It was on the basis of this constitution that Italy was to be unified. In articles 1–23, Lo Statuto Albertino explains the perpetual and irrevocable executive power of the King. To quote only three introductory articles designating his supreme political position:

Art. 2. – The state is governed by a representative monarchical government. The throne is hereditary, according to the Salic law.

Art. 3. – The legislative power shall be exercised collectively by the King and two Chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

Art. 4. – The person of the King is sacred and inviolable.
(Statuto Albertino: 1848).

In the initial article and before those concerning the King's person, the statute deals with the reigning religion in the country and the status of other forms of worship, stating that, "The Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion is the sole religion of the state. All other forms of worship now in existence are tolerated in conformity with the law." The statute is interesting because it establishes Italian as the national language. The statute mentions the position of the national and/or other languages in the articles dedicated to the common provisions of the two Chambers, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Article 62 specifically explains the use of the language in the chambers:

The Italian language is the official language of the Chamber. It is, however, optional to use French for those members who belong to areas in which it is used, or in response to the same.

The myth of Rome

Despite controversies about the future of a united Italy, be it a republic or a monarchy, federal or centralised, Italian patriots considered it time that cultural and linguistic unity of the peninsula – the product of a long common history – should coincide with political unity in the nation-state. It was nation-state building which was the goal of the Risorgimento, and not only independence for one state or another. In the fourth stanza of the future national anthem of 1847, Goffredo Mameli⁷ regrets the disunion of Italy: "*Noi fummo da secoli calpesti, derisi, perché non siam popolo, perché siam divisi*" ("For centuries we've been oppressed, derided,

because we are not a people, because we are divided"). The division was seen by Alessandro Manzoni, one of the main writers of the Risorgimento, as one of the causes of foreign domination – the only way out was unification and the creation of a nation: "*Una d'arme, di lingua, d'altare, di memorie, di sangue e di cor*" (One of weapon, language, altar, memories, blood and heart; *Marzo* 1821, vv. 30–31).

During the Risorgimento, however, the definition of linguistic and cultural unity – which could delineate the borders between Italy and the rest of Europe, the Italians and the others – was controversial. To which historical period of the peninsula did the thinkers of the Risorgimento refer to define linguistic and cultural unity? What were the main contents of this linguistic and cultural unity, as opposed to the existing differences between Tuscany and Sicily, Genoa and Venice? What were the national myths of the Risorgimento? What was the role granted to the Catholic Church in a country having an unified religion?

In the establishment of national myths, the idea of Rome was, of course, very powerful: "Italian history has always been dominated by the heritage of ancient Rome: the great myth of the eternal town, lady of the world, pushed behind all the other genealogical origins." (Poliakov: 1971, 85) And behind Rome, there was the genealogical father Aeneas, who had come to give birth to the Romans. Even in the Middle Ages, the independent Italian towns (*Comuni*) went back to the Roman traditions to glorify their founders. Florence is one example: a historian of Florence, Giovanni Villani (ca. 1275–1348), attributes its foundation to Julius Caesar, while Dante considers Florence "*bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma*" (most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome). Dante opposed the glory of Rome to the present oppression of the Italian nation, victim of wars between the Popes and the German emperors. He wrote: "*Ahi seroa Italia, di dolore ostello, nave senza nocchiero*" (Ah, servant Italy, hostel of sorrow, ship without helmsman).

Similar expressions can be found in the work of another famous Italian poet of the fourteenth century, Francesco Petrarca. In his 'Song to Italy', he sheds tears for Italy, theatre of wars

between the Italian princes and foreign kings and emperors: "*Italia mia, benché il parlar sia indarno*" ("My Italy, even if speaking is useless"), and hopes that Italians will find their "former bravery" which made the glory of Rome, fighting against the invaders: "*Virtù contra furore prenderà l'armi; e fia el combater certo: ché l'antico valore nell'italici cor non é ancor morto.*" ("Virtue against fury will take up arms; and let the certain fighting start: because the old valour in the Italics' heart is not dead yet.") One century later, Machiavelli took the verses of *Italia mia*, at the end of the Prince, followed, in the eighteenth century by Vittorio Alfieri, whom we mentioned earlier as a writer who influenced the beginning of the Risorgimento. Finally, one should not forget that the entire Humanist movement, which provided the basis for the Renaissance, was inspired by the idea of ancient Rome.

During the eighteenth century, there was a particular interest in the Tuscans as true ancestors of the Italians; but, as Poliakov writes, this interest remained a sort of amusement for intellectuals, the myth of Rome remaining too strong. The leaders of the Risorgimento were all fascinated by it. Manzoni declared that he became a historian to show how the '*romanità*' (spirit of Rome) had been preserved by the Popes during the Middle Ages: "Rome was the dream of my young years, the main idea of my spiritual conceptions, the religion of my soul; for me, Rome was – and stays, in spite of the present shame – the temple of humanity [...]. Behind its walls, the Unity of the World was elaborated" (Manzoni: 1822). Mazzini also spoke about the past glories of Rome, the pagan Rome and the Christian one, dreaming of building a third city which would be the centre of a new universalistic religion. Gioberti wanted Rome to be the centre of a federation of peoples of the world, but under the Pope's rule. The myth of Rome was equally central for secular and clerical thinkers. Garibaldi, who was secular, had as his motto: "*O Roma o morte*" ("either Rome or death"). Even fascism established its power through the March on Rome in 1922.

The myth of Rome overshadowed all conflicts the Romans had at the time of the Republic with different populations living in the peninsula, such as the Celts (Gauls)⁸ of northern Italy, the

Tuscans or the Sanniti of Abruzzi. Moreover, the linguistic unity of Italy, which had existed during the Roman Empire when the spoken language was Latin (even together with other local languages), disappeared in the Middle Ages. The 'vulgar' languages, spoken from Piedmont to Sicily, not to mention Sardinia or Friuli, differed greatly from one region to another. Linguistic unity, which the Risorgimento considered evident in the nineteenth century, was not a heritage of the Romans. In the absence of a unitarian political history, the development of a linguistic unity was the result of the extraordinary literary development of just one region, Tuscany, during the fourteenth century. In other words, linguistic unity was the result of the cultural history of the Italian cities and regions. The Tuscan language was considered the language of the entire peninsula because it was the language of three major writers of the fourteenth century, Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, who were recognised by all the scholars of the peninsula as major artists. Alessandro Manzoni could dream of Rome which on a March evening in 1820 he entered on foot, trembling and adoring, as in a religious temple: yet, years later, when he wanted to learn writing, it was to Florence that he went, "washing his clothes in the Arno river", as he used to say.

The Tuscan and the Italian, the intellectuals and the people

As a part of the Roman Empire of Charlemagne, Italy became part of the German-Roman Empire, being as well with the Pope in Rome the centre of Christianity. The control that the German Emperors could establish over Italy was weak however. As a consequence, the peninsula was for centuries divided into free towns, called *Comuni*, Republics (like Venice, Pisa, Genoa), and *Signorie* which were small or larger kingdoms. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the free towns were progressively taken over by larger regional entities, the *Signorie*, which were often on the scale of Regions (for example, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Grand Duchy of Piedmont, the Republic of Venice) or even more extensive entities, such as the largest Kingdom of Italy, the

Kingdom of the two Sicilies, which covered practically the entire south of the country. In the midst of this long-lasting political division, which the German Emperors had been unable to avoid, linguistic and cultural common elements were developed by the scholars and artists, who in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance were quite mobile, moving from one town to another and from one court to another. Italy was, in fact, a cultural area for a reduced elite of scholars, and politically divided. Relatively early, this cultural area reached a linguistic unity for the elite.

The Tuscan dialect imposed itself as the literary language from the fourteenth century, thanks to the work of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio. Linguistic unity was the result of the great literary season of fourteenth century Tuscany. In the linguistic area, called by Dante “country of the languages of the *sì*” (“*il bel paese là dove il sì suona*” – the beautiful country where the *sì* sounds), in opposition to the languages of *oc* and of *oïl* (*oui*), Tuscan became the literary language, progressively overtaking Latin in the works of poets and scholars. Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio were seen as poets and writers who represented a large cultural and linguistic area, and not only in their regions of origin. Scholars, poets, and artists were not perceived at the time as belonging to a specific place. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, their mobility within the Italian peninsula, as well as within the large borders of Christianity, was considered ‘normal’. Dante was Florentine and loved his hometown enormously, but he lived in different towns and states, dying in exile in Ravenna without having been able to go back to Florence. Petrarca lived in Avignon for a long period, in love with a French woman, Laura, to whom he dedicated his most beautiful poems.⁹ Both natives of Tuscany, Leonardo da Vinci worked in Milan and Michelangelo Buonarroti in Rome. Subsequently, Leonardo left Milan to go to the French court, where he died. Torquato Tasso was born in Naples and worked at the Este Court in Ferrara, the Milanese Caravaggio worked in Rome and in the island of Malta, the Pisan Galileo Galilei worked in Padua in the Republic of Venice.

Between 1570 and 1580, a group of Florentine intellectuals used to meet informally in a bookshop, in order to maintain the

purity of the language and to unify literary Italian on the model of the Tuscan vernacular. These intellectuals called themselves "*Crusconi*" (the bran flakes, from *crusca* – bran) with the intention of giving a jocular tone to their conversations, as well as a colourful expression to their goal of separating the 'good' from the 'bad' of the language. In 1582, the *Crusconi* gave formal status to their meetings, christening them with the name of *Accademia (della Crusca)*, *Crusca Academy*. Leonardo Salviati, one of its most active members, together with A. F. Grazzini, wanted to promote a Florentine language based on the model of vernacular classicism established by Pietro Bembo, who idealised the fourteenth century authors, especially Boccaccio and Petrarca. The Florentines included of course Dante as a main reference. In 1612, among other things, Salviati participated to the promotion of a vocabulary in which he planned to gather and declare "all the words and manners of speech, which we have found in the best writings. which were done before the year 1400." (*Avvertimenti* l. II, cap. xii.). The *Crusca Academy* was the first such institution in Europe and the first to produce a modern vocabulary of a national language, later used as a model by other European nations. When Tuscan was recognised as the literary language of the peninsula, Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio were intellectuals participating in the political life of their time. The same can be said for Machiavelli. If Machiavelli's dream had come true, that is if Duke Valentino had unified Italy, Tuscan would probably have become a national language much earlier. But at the end of the sixteenth century, a large parts of Italy became a Spanish protectorate. Only the Republic of Venice kept its independence.

In the seventeenth century the Counter-Reformation took place, which – among other things – introduced the Inquisition. With this, the best scholars and thinkers began to leave Italy, establishing themselves in various European courts.¹⁰ When they came back, it was sometimes at the risk of their life as shown by the story of the great philosopher Giordano Bruno, burned in Rome by the Catholic Inquisition in 1600. Those who stayed became progressively servile intellectuals, lacking the spirit of independence, flattering power, separated from the people.

Centuries later, Antonio Gramsci would speak about them taking as an example Hannibal Caro and Vincenzo Monti. Caro, who lived in the seventeenth century, was the translator of *The Aeneid*, writing poems in honour of every King who could pay him (for example the King of France, to whom he dedicated this poem: “*venite all’ombra dei bei gigli d’oro, care ninfe devote ai miei giacinti...*” – “come in the shadow of the beautiful golden lilies, dear nymphs devoted to my hyacinths...”). Monti, who lived at the end of the eighteenth century, witnessed the French revolution and the Napoleon era, writing poems in honour of the King of France, of the Pope, of Napoleon, of the Austrians, a perfect servant for everybody in power. Among other things, he translated *The Iliad*. Monti is already the stereotype of the Italian ‘*voltagabbana*’ (turncoat, *der Intrigant der Rosenkavalier*), still so common today. It is sufficient to look at the leftwing intellectuals recruited by the Berlusconi party such as Ferdinando Adornato, Giuliano Ferrara, etc.

In the Italy of the Counter-Reformation and until the Risorgimento and the Unification, local languages and dialects continued to be spoken by the majority of the people of all social classes. Tuscan, for which the Crusca Academy had written a first dictionary, remained a language for scholars and small elite. In the eighteenth century, French had replaced Tuscan among the aristocracy and elite as the language of prestige: Carlo Goldoni, a Venetian playwright, used the Venetian dialect for his plays and French for his memoirs. Piedmont born Vittorio Alfieri, mentioned earlier for the influence of his ideas on the Risorgimento, had to go live in Florence in order to write his tragedies in Italian. In Piedmont, ruled by the Savoy who supported the Risorgimento and became kings of Italy, the official language was French until the Albertino Statute of 1848.

The Italy of the Risorgimento was a country where a minority spoke Italian and where popular classes spoke dialects and were illiterate. The creation of educational systems in some regions had not diminished the distance between the intellectuals and the common people. The majority of the Italian states did not care at all about the education of the population. There were

no state schools in Italy with the exception of the Kingdom of Piedmont, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and Lombardy ruled by the Austrian Empire. In all the other states, education was in the hands of the Church.

Although the main actors of the political life during the Risorgimento insisted on the idea of the Unification, the linguistic differences, the distance between the intellectuals and the people and the importance of rural traditions presented a complexity that did not go unnoticed. This complexity appeared clearly even before Unification through the words of the Minister Massimo D'Azeglio (1840s–50s): “*L'Italia è fatta, ora van fatti gli italiani*” (Italy is done, now we have to do the Italians; see below), showing that there was a widespread consciousness of these differences. Seventy years after the Unification, these differences would still be there and they would be deeply analysed by one of the greatest intellectuals of the unitarian history of Italy, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's approach theorised the existence of deep divisions within national culture: the class difference produces a dominating and a dominated culture, the latter being defined as well as ‘folkloric culture’.

The Italian dialects

Italian became the official language of Piedmont through the Albertino Statute in 1848 (1.2.4.) and of the Italian State after the Italian Unification in 1861. Article 62 of the Albertino Statute stated: “The Italian language is the official language of the Chamber. It is, however, optional to use French for those members who belong to areas in which it is used or in response to the same.” (*Statuto Albertino*, 1848, art. 62) Thus, the need for a certain bilingualism in situations where it was inevitable had already been recognised and agreed to in the Chambers before the Unification.

Even after Italian became the official state language, dialects and the local vernaculars stayed alive. In comparison with the use of Italian, the dialects were very vital “and used by 97.5% of

the population of the newly unified state (De Mauro: 1986, 43).” (G. Sepe: 2001, 67). This statement concerned both the lower and upper classes of the population. Meanwhile, the integrity of Italian dialectal plurality was maintained, despite sacrifices in the form of losses or the assimilation suffered in the process of Italianisation, which became a reality mainly after World War II.

Italian dialects can be subdivided into two main groups: northern and southern Italian. The central subgroup can be also included within the group of southern dialects. In the following outline of Italian dialects, we will use the linguistic map proposed by the linguist Tullio De Mauro in 1987 (1987, 194–196). According to this map, the Gaul-Italic dialects (northern Italian dialects) is used in the northern parts of the country. This dialectal family includes the variants Piedmontese, Lombard, Ligurian, Emilian with its Romagnole sub-variants, and Veneto.

The central dialectal area is composed of Tuscan and the Median dialectal group, including the Umbro-marchigiana and Romanesca variants. The Tuscan dialect (or at least some of its variants) has been chosen to act as the national language. In his map, De Mauro proposes the subdivision of the Italian South in two dialectal areas: south and extreme south. The extreme-southern dialectal group includes the Calabrese dialect, used in the centre-southern part of the Region, Salentino of the southern Apulia and Sicilian. Finally, we must remember the *Corsican* and *Sardinian* variants. The first one can be seen as part of the southern dialects, even if it has some traces originated from *Livornese*, while the second claims to be recognised and accepted separately from Italian and therefore as a minority language.

Cultural diversity

Unification, regional differences and minorities

After the Unification of Italy, the new government was quite aware of the country’s complex and multiple differences: linguistic differences, regional differences, the southern question which

appeared at the time of the unification when Garibaldi and the thousands arrived in Sicily¹¹ as a main element of division.

One of the first Ministers of the Italian Kingdom, Massimo D'Azeglio (Minister between 1840s and 50s), said: "*L'Italia è fatta, ora van fatti gli italiani*" (Italy is done, now we have to do the Italians).¹² In order to "do the Italians", a centralised unitarian state on the French model was preferred. The army, the educational system and the bureaucracy were considered to be the instruments that would unify the population linguistically and culturally. A first step for the linguistic and cultural unification was the introduction for all of Italy of the Law on Education of the Piedmont, the Casati Law of 1859. This law defined the syllabus and organisation of public schools. Following the French model, the new state wanted to put into practice the principle of 'one language, one nation'.

But the differences were not only cultural and linguistic: they were also social and economic. As we have mentioned, the main difference was the north-south distinction, which became crucial for the future development of Italy. Southern Italy had been ruled until 1861 by a Bourbon government, which although it had tried to develop some industries, had introduced no constitutional freedoms. The most of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was still organised under an almost feudal system of agricultural production, based on a system of landed estate. Moreover, illiteracy was much greater in this area than in the north, where the Piedmont and the Lombard-Veneto already had school systems.¹³

New Italy found the two parts of the peninsula, the south and the north, which were united after one thousand years, in completely opposite conditions... On one side, a tradition of autonomy had created a brave bourgeoisie, rich with ideas and projects, and the economic organisation was similar to that of other European countries, oriented towards capitalism and industry. On the other side, the paternalist administrations of Spain and the Bourbons had produced nothing: the absence of a bourgeoisie, primitive agriculture, which was not even able to satisfy the local market needs: no streets, no harbours, no exploitation of the

water which the region, because of its special shape, possessed.
(Gramsci: 1966)

The north-south question, the so-called *quistione meridionale*,¹⁴ had emerged: it was to influence the history of United Italy up to the present day. The economic gap would become increasingly important. In the past few years, a movement called the Northern League has been founded that wants to divide the north of the country from the south.

Who then, in the midst of many differences, were the Italians referred to by M. D'Azeglio? Did the term include all people who lived within the new borders, including the Jews and the linguistic minorities, had come from the Balkans fleeing the Ottoman expansion? Did it include the territorial linguistic minorities who for centuries had survived in the mountains, the valleys or the islands? Was it possible to define 'ethnic Italians' or people of Italian blood after centuries of invasions and hybridisation, the peninsula having been criss-crossed by German tribes, Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, French and Austrian armies? What about the Italians who were living in areas still dominated by the Austrian Empire? What about those who spoke Italian dialects and cooked ravioli, but had recently freely chosen by referendum to become part of France, the inhabitants of Nice – where the great hero of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was born – and in Menton? Ironically, people found the new state so unattractive that, when they could become part of another nation-state such as France as full citizens, they chose *en masse* to do so. The answers to these questions varied according to the different ideas of Italy and of the Italians. These ideas were influenced, on one side by the founding myths of the Italian nation and, on the other, by the changes in the national and international political and economic context, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth.

Conceptions of Italy and of the Italians varied according to different political ideologies present in the Italian political arena: the so-called 'historical right' (the counterpart of conservative movements in the rest of Europe) and 'historical left' (the

counterpart of the so-called radicalism in the rest of Europe – in France, e.g. *les radicaux de gauche*), who dominated the debate in the first years of the Unitarian State, and later socialism, nationalism and, finally, fascism. However, these different conceptions played a role in the policies of the new Unitarian State: for example, the idea of the need to occupy all the territories included in the so-called natural national borders of Italy played a role in promoting wars to conquer them (1877 and, later, World War I).

One conception considered Italy as a set geographical space with ‘natural’ borders established around the Alps: the wars of the nineteenth century and World War I were caused by the intention to occupy the territories representing these ‘natural’ borders. What was considered ‘natural’ was in fact political. This type of rhetoric however combined geographers’ ‘scientific’ opinion (the sea, the Alps and the ‘natural obstacles’ of the Alps) with the cultural traditions of people living ‘beyond the borders’. It became very important with the development of the ‘irredentist’ movement (see 3.2). Another conception considered the Italians as a people who can expand anywhere (the Italians are called a people of ‘*santi, poeti, navigatori*’ – saints, poets, navigators). This conception became very important with the development of Italian emigration. The two conceptions were not necessarily opposed, but they coexisted, connected by an ‘ethnic’ element.

These conceptions influenced the right of citizenship (the choice between *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*), the type of incorporation or the forms of inclusion and exclusion of minorities. The existence of minorities was recognised from the beginning of the Unitarian State, but the status to be given to them in the new state would be clarified only after 1945 and through the Constitution of the Italian Republic. After Unification and even more with fascism, the choice was clearly in favour of a centralised state with a large bureaucracy. This did not improve the recognition of minorities. Was this new state centralised state able to “do the Italians”? It is very difficult to answer this question. There are many theories about the low impact of the Italian state on civil society helped maintain regional and local differences and

the weakness of the sense of national belonging. Nevertheless the absence, until recently, of regional independence movements demonstrates that local or regional identification processes were not particularly strong either.

Minorities in Italy after the unification

The first census of the new Nation was carried out just after the Unification of Italy in the same 1861. After this one, another three censuses were taken in: 1901, 1911 and 1921; they show which ethno-linguistic minorities were present (or considered as such) in Italy at the time, as also their demographic situation. The first census showed the presence of the following ethno-linguistic minorities: Albanians, Catalans, Greeks and Germans. The German-speaking minority was considered unique: in fact, the minority generically known as 'Germans' comprises at least four linguistic sub-groups. In the 1901 and 1911 censuses, the question concerned the language used by the head of the family, extending automatically the use of the given language to all the members of the family. Albanian, Catalan, Croatian, French, Greek, Slovenian and German families entered the list of 1901 census. In 1911, the same minority groups and almost the same demographic data were registered: Albanian, Catalan, Croatian, French, Greek, Slovenian and German families.

After World War I, the Italian state effectuated some territorial modifications in the north-east of the country: South Tyrol, Trentino, Dolomites, Friuli, Gorizia and Trieste zones, and Istria were annexed to Italy. Consequently, the number of ethno-linguistic minorities appeared more important in the 1921 census: Albanians, Catalans, Croats, French, Greeks, Rumanians, Slavs, Slovenians, Germans and Ladins (Tyrolean and Friulan). Another detail attracts attention: the 1921 census mentioned two minorities which would not appear in the future censuses or texts on minorities in Italy. They were Istrian Rumanians, who subsequently 'disappeared' when Istria was annexed to Yugoslavia after World War II. The same happened with the Slavs,

who in the census document of 1921 appear with Croats and Slovenes, representing the historical Slavonic minorities of the country. Actually, the Friulan Slovenes were marked by this ethnonym in this census.

It is evident that not all national minorities were calculated; it seems that some of them – certainly present in Italy at the time – were invisible to the eyes both of the scholars and censuses compilers. Minorities were omitted from the censuses even if some researches were already dedicated to them. They included the Franco-Provençals and Occitans, who lived in some areas of Piedmont at the border with France, the Sardinians, Roma, Sinti, and Jews who were certainly present then on the Italian territory. In fact the Kingdom of Piedmont had occupied Sardinia since the eighteenth century and was called the Kingdom of Sardinia. Sardinians were probably ignored as an ethno-linguistic minority, having been considered Italians speaking a dialect.

Some ‘forgotten’ minorities entered the subsequent regulative documents, whilst others have still not managed to acquire this. These include the Roma, Sinti and Jewish minorities, despite their age-old presence in the country. The Roma and Sinti were not very numerous in 1861 and the following years. According to linguistic findings, it seems that the first Roma communities reached the Peninsula from the southern Balkans or directly from Greece, across the Adriatic Sea in the fourteenth century. Sinti arrived in Italy from the north from German-speaking territories, as evidenced by their dialects, which still contain many German linguistic borrowings. Roughly speaking, Sinti can be divided into Italian Sinti, with many territorial subgroups, and Germanic Sinti, who remained on the far north of the country. German linguistic features are particularly noticeable in the dialects of the Germanic Sinti; they reached Italy later – some as late as the second half of the nineteenth century or even the first two decades of the twentieth. After the arrival of these historical Roma and Sinti groups, more important flows of Roma (prevalingly from various Balkan communities) began to arrive in Italy in the twentieth century: during the 1920s and 30s, and then from the late 1960s until the present.

The census of 1921 was the last to consider spoken language covering the whole national territory. Since 1961, the census on linguistic minorities have been taken solely in the provinces of Bolzano and Trieste. The demographic survey of the linguistic minorities is still assigned to the local authorities. The new Italian Kingdom wanted to be secular (the Pope was considered an enemy of Unification): this was one of the reasons why the religious minorities of the Jews and of the Waldenses were not considered. Religious minorities did not however speak different languages. Regardless of their religious identity, the members of these groups took part in the Risorgimento movement and were considered Italians. There was no ethnic or racial idea of the Jews at the time. Their presence in Italy dates back to ancient Rome. Even though they were forced to live in the ghettos where the gates were closed at night and where they suffered discrimination, and though this lasted longer than in other countries (the last ghetto, the one in Rome, was opened as late as 1870), the Jews of Italy had, according to scholars, a symbiotic relationship with the local culture in which they lived. After Unification the full participation of the Jews in the social, economic, civic and national life increased (Bidussa et al.: 1992). The Italian Jewish population was less numerous than Jewish populations in other European countries: in 1938, when the fascist racial laws were passed, it numbered 58,412.

The Waldenses are a Christian minority belonging to the family of the evangelical or protestant churches. The Waldensian Evangelical Church has been present in Italy since the Middle Ages, mostly in some areas of Piedmont. They were discriminated against in the same way as the Jews: like the Jews in ghettos, the Waldenses had to live in specific villages in the countryside and could not settle elsewhere. For centuries, due to the Counter-Reformation, protestants had not been authorised to develop their churches in Italy. Having been repressed by the civic and religious powers up to the mid-nineteenth century, they gained more freedom only after unification, and have since expanded all over Italy.

The geographical distribution of the minorities

Migration and miscegenation processes occurring in the Apennine Peninsula over centuries have left deep vestiges obvious to this day. They are visible in the variety of minority languages spoken in the country which differ from the official variant of Italian and its dialects. The minority languages of Italy all belong to the Indo-European linguistic branch. Most of them belong to the three large linguistic families present in Europe – Romance, Germanic and Slavic. Furthermore, there are Greeks and Albanians, still speaking Indo-European languages, but they are separate ones and do not belong to any one of the large families.

The minorities which speak languages of the Romance or Neo-Latin group, are primarily spread in the north-western parts of the country:

- a) French in Val d'Aosta and in some Piedmont valleys;
- b) Francoprovenzale in Val d'Aosta, in Piedmont (north-west of Turin), in Apulia, in the Province of Foggia (towns of Faeto and San Vito);
- c) Provençal (Occitan) in Piedmont and Liguria, in the Cozie and Maritime Alps, (south-western part of Piedmont and western ends of Liguria). There is also one colony in the town of Guardia Piemontese (Province of Cosenza, Calabria);
- d) Catalan in the city of Alghero in Sardinia;
- e) Sardinian, all over Sardinia;
- f) Friulan in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and in the province of Venice;
- g) Ladin in different zones of the extreme north east of the country, mainly in the upper valley of the Piave and Adige rivers.

Germanic languages are used in some Alpine valleys in the upper north of the country. Beside the South-Tyrolean German, widely spoken in the Province of Bolzano, there are archaic variants of the German language spread throughout the Alpine valleys, which can be divided as follows: German of Monte Rosa spoken by the Walser in the Anzasca, Formazza, Sesia and

Lys valleys (Piedmont and Val d'Aosta); the Mòchens German spoken in the south-eastern part of the Province of Trent (Trentino-Alto Adige); the Cimbrian German of the northern part of the Province of Verona and Vicenza (Veneto), including the German-speaking islands in Carnia and in the Tarvisio zone (Friuli). The Slavic group is represented by two communities: the *Slovenes* living in the boundary zone next to the Republic of Slovenia, and the *Croats* inhabiting the centre-north of the Molise Region. Finally, the Italian South is strewn with historical Albanian and, to a lesser degree, Greek communities. We can find Albanian colonies in: the Pescara zone (Abruzzi); in the corner between Molise, Campania and Apulia; in the northern part of the Basilicata Region; in the Province of Taranto (Apulia); south of Palermo (Sicily); and in Calabria, mainly in its northern part, in the Province of Cosenza, but they are also present in the Provinces of Crotone and Catanzaro. The Greeks, on the other hand, are present in the Province of Reggio (Calabria) and mainly in the Salentin Grecía (Apulia). Apart from these territorial ethno-linguistic minorities, various dialects of the so-called non-territorial Gypsy (Roma and Sinti) communities are spoken all over the country.

There is a growing interest among historians about Italian nation-building, Italian nationalism, and the formation of the Italian national identity, including 'Italianità' (Italian sentiment or spirit). Many historians have worked on the Crispi period at the end of the nineteenth century, on the Giolitti time and the nationalist movements that developed in the first twenty years of the twentieth century, ending up in fascism (Gaeta, 1981; Perfetti, 1977; Lill and Valsecchi, 1981). In order to better understand the type of debate which took place in Italy after the Unification, Galante Garrone establishes a distinction between two terms: the 'nazionalitario' (in favour of nation-building) period or age of the Risorgimento, and the nationalist period or age which meant the attempt of expansion in Europe and in the Mediterranean in the 1870s (Galante Garrone, 1973), which defined the 'others' as potential enemies and started the Italian military adventures.

The 1870–1922 period is very important for understanding the roots of fascism that developed in Italy and of the progressive

abandonment of the idea of nation based on the liberal and democratic ideals which prevailed in the Risorgimento, as well as for understanding the new nationalism with a new idea of 'people' based on ethnicity. In this unstable period, where the roots of the fascist tragedy begin, an important role was played by irredentism (from *Italia irredenta* – lit. unliberated Italy), a movement whose goal was to reunite the regions of Trent and Trieste with Italy. Even after the war against Austria in 1866 (when Italy was on the side of Prussia) the regions remained part of the Austrian Empire. The movement was active in both regions through various patriotic societies such as the *Società Alpina*, shut down in 1872 and reopened as *Società Alpinisti Tridentini* (S.A.T.) on the model of the German Alpine Societies (*Deutsche Alpenverein*). In the Kingdom of Italy, a few activists bound to the historical left (radicals) founded the irredentist movement in Naples in 1877. In fact irredentism presented different aspects. Part of the movement was democratic and mainly voiced the demands of 800,000 Italian-speaking people still living in the Austrian Empire. Some radical followers of Mazzini defended irredentism as a freedom movement against the colonial policy of the rightwing government who sent troops to colonise African countries. These Mazzinian groups saw irredentism as a means of fighting any policy of rapprochement with Austria, favouring instead an alliance with France, the Latin sister, which also promoted a policy of democratic republicanism viewed by many Italian politicians with interest.

Considering as part of Italy territories in which different linguistic groups (Italian-, German-, Slavonic speaking) lived together exposed these minorities (or even the majorities, in some areas like South-Tyrol or some border regions with the Slovenian majority) to risks of oppression and discrimination. These risks appeared clearly when those territories were occupied by the Italian government after World War I. What is particularly interesting is that an important part of the irredentist movement grew within the radical movements, the historical left, and against the policies of the historical right. It was in these radical milieus where the idea of the need for a war against Austria in order for

Italy to find its place among nations was developed. A few years later, Italy would enter World War I with the official purpose of conquering Trent and Trieste zones. Thanks to irredentism, different forms of nationalism found a common purpose. Benito Mussolini, a former socialist who had fought against the colonial war in Libya in 1911, was in favour to World War I. So was Gabriele D'Annunzio, a poet who a few years later became the official poet of fascism.

Thus, one of the goals of World War I was to allow 800,000 Italian-speaking people to become a part of Italy. Instead, in the years leading to the war, up to 900,000 Italians left the country each year in order to live and work in the United States, Canada, Brazil and Argentina. A part of Italy scattered around the world, forming the origins of the history of the *"Italiani all'estero"* (Italians abroad) (Gabaccia: 2000).

The Great Emigration

After Unification, a new phenomenon characterised the history of Italy for a hundred years: emigration, which in view of the considerable number of departures can be called the Great Emigration. Even if Italian emigration was important before Unification, with traditional migratory flows of artisans and of artists (Audenino: 2003) and flows of political refugees and economic migrants towards North Africa, Latin America and France, it was only after Unification that mass migration took place.

This new phenomenon influenced the relationship between territory and people in the vision of the Italian nation: the Great Migration meant that 26 million people left (half of the present Italian population) between 1876 and 1976 (the data for the departures begin in 1876). Approximate statistics show that 39% of the emigrants were from the south, 20% from the centre; 21% from the north west and 20% from north east. As for the destination countries, between 1876 and 1976, 52% were European and 44% were part of the American continents. Around six millions Italians went to the United States, 4,500,000 to France, 4,000,000

to Switzerland (including seasonal workers), 3,000,000 to Argentina, 2,500,000 to Germany, 1,500,000 to Brazil. The historian Ernesto Ragionieri (1962) wrote:

Emigration is an important chapter in the history of Italy, both as an economic phenomenon, a consequence of changes in the productive structures [...] and as a social fact. It is important for its cultural influence and the interaction between Italian society and those of the receiving countries.

Different causes have been seen as an explanation for Italian emigration: demography, poor natural resources, backwardness of the economic development. According to the historical periods, political powers and economists have insisted on the positive aspects of emigration on employment and the revenues of the families who stayed behind. On the opposite side, other political forces have insisted on the loss of human resources for the sending regions. Emigration affected all the Italian regions without exception. Periods of exodus however changed from one region to another given the different development between north and south. Comparing the emigration movement in Italy to those in other areas of Europe, Candeloro (1972) has observed that in the countries which had seen industrialisation during the second half of the nineteenth century, migratory flows became less important (this is mainly the case in Germany), while in a country like Italy, where industrialisation came later, emigration grew in despite it. It is precisely during the introduction of industrialisation, between 1900 and 1914, that emigration was most important, becoming a basic element of the political and social equilibrium of the country.

Migration first affected Northern Italy until 1880. The progressive introduction of capitalist relationships in agriculture leads to ruptures in rural societies and the expulsion of the exceeding labour force. Industry is not yet capable of employing this labour force. Migration was to effect southern Italy at the end of the 1880s: between 1881 and 1890, 73% of migrants left the northern and central regions, and only 27% southern Italy (Livi-

Bacci, 1972). In the south, crisis became a permanent feature: industrialisation and capitalism did not find a fertile ground in its regions. This feature is not only the case in the south however; throughout Italy, even in the north, some archaic elements of under-development remained after Unification. Differences among the regions were also important. The theory of regional specialisation of the migratory flows appears to be an even more interesting approach:

It seems particularly important to analyse regional specificities from the point of view of Italy's integration in an international labour market, taking into consideration the links between the regions and the European and American markets. (Sori: 1979)

The major differences between the regions produced specialised migratory chains: there was a migration specific to each reality and local environment, with its own peculiar history. What is more important is that each migratory chain organised its community around a group of villagers in the receiving country. These villagers maintained a strong local identity and sense of belonging, while at the same time the receiving society perceived the Italians as a unified group. Villagers from different areas saw themselves as Sicilians of a given village, Apulians or Venetians became 'Italians' for the receiving society. Millions of Italians abroad formed one large diaspora. Or, as Donna Gabaccia and other historians like Bruno Ramirez wrote after years of research on the Italians in the United States or Canada, formed hundreds of diasporas, characterised by strong belonging to a village or region, whose ritual gatherings take place on the feasts in honour of their local saint.

The influence of the Italian state on the emigrant communities was weak until fascism, which attempted to control the emigration phenomenon by making emigration much more difficult, and to influence Italians abroad, with some success especially in North and South America.¹⁵ In Europe, especially in France, the presence of political emigrants played an important role in the opposition to attempts to turn emigrant communities fascist. The

importance of the emigration movements influenced the legislation in matters of *jus sanguinis*, instead of *jus soli* voted in 1912.

Fascism and minorities

Fascists came to power in 1922 with a nationalist authoritarian programme. The nationalist fascist approach to the question of what was Italy and who were the Italians went back to the national myth of Rome, namely its imperial and military power. Being Italian – or the ‘Italianity’ (Italian sentiment or spirit) – was directly linked to this myth. ‘Italianity’ and ‘Romanity’ (Roman sentiment or spirit) were superimposed in the fascist mythology. The entire ideology was in fact guided by a strong desire to build a new Empire with extended borders from the natural ones of pre-war nationalism (and nationalist irredentism) to the borders of the old Roman Empire. In fact, fascism had parted ways with the ‘nationalitarian’ (from ‘*nazionalitario*’, i.e. in favour of nation-building as opposed to nationalism) ideas of the Risorgimento. According to the latter, the Italian nation would have been the result of a liberal movement, the fight for independence being associated to the liberal system of rights and freedoms. The myth of Empire obviously implied imperialistic and colonial ambitions: during fascism, Italy undertook wars in Ethiopia and Albania, and reinforced repression in its older colonies such as Libya, Eritrea and Somalia.

Fascist policies promoted nationalistic ideology in education and every sector of social life. Along with nationalism, racist ideas developed in Europe and Italy became part of the official fascist culture (e.g. those of the criminologist Cesare Lombroso from the 1870s¹⁶).

The Italian pre-fascist ruling class was aware of the diversity of the linguistic minorities but with the coming of fascism, its nationalistic stance led to their repression. (Sepe: 2001, 71)

Actually, fascist legislation followed these ideas: repression of the minorities through various measures aimed at their annihilation (e.g. forced Italianisation) or 1938 racial laws addressed to the Jewish population. Such an attitude especially concerned specific minority groups such as the Germans of the Alto Adige Region or the Slovenes of the Venezia-Giulia. Fascism exercised more tolerance towards the French language spoken in the Valle d'Aosta than it did towards the German language spoken in the Alto Adige, or Slovenian in the Venezia-Giulia, taking into consideration the deep historical ties between the Valle and the Savoy State (Palici: 1999, 31). The alliance with nazi Germany was a direct consequence of the fascist ideology and policies. The Monarchy granted special protection to the French minority, while the Italianisation of South-Tyrol and Alto Adige was very brutal. The alliance with nazi Germany after the annexation of Austria in 1938 forced the German-speaking population to choose Italy or Germany, provoking mass migration, whose outcomes were tragic (the German-speaking South-Tyroleanes were sent by the Nazis to the eastern territories recently occupied by the Reich). But Jews and the Roma and Sinti people were the minorities that would suffer most from fascist policies.

During fascism Italians were portrayed as an 'Aryan race', whilst racial laws considered Jews only a race. In 1938, the fascist government organised a racial census in which 58,412 persons 'of Jewish race' were counted. In 1946 the Jewish community had been reduced to approximately half that number: 26.000. 8,500 were killed in deportations and massacres, 9,000 emigrated and some 2,000 had converted to other religions. The Roma and Sinti became the target of real persecutions having been defined by the fascist ideology as naturally 'unsociable' people. According to laws concerning public order (against wandering, beggary, etc.), they were all subject to internment in concentration camps set up in various parts of the country.

Gramsci and the anthropologists

Fascism fell on 20 July 1943, deposed by Marshal Badoglio and by a monarchy concerned for its survival with the American bombing of Sicily and the defeats of the Italian army. With the disastrous outcomes of the Italian state and the Italian monarchy who had accepted and supported fascism, and its ridiculous exhibitions of nostalgia for the Roman Empire culminating in the invasion of the peaceful country of Ethiopia, conquered with gas-weapons, nothing was left of the Risorgimento ideals. The little which was to be saved of the *nazionalitarie* ideas were the prophetic words of a man whom fascism had imprisoned, Antonio Gramsci, the greatest Italian Marxist philosopher and secretary of the Communist Party: "You are going to destroy this country and we will have to rescue it." This took the form of the Resistance which struggled in Italy between 1943 and 1945 against the Nazi occupation and its fascist allies and supporters.

What were the reasons for the catastrophe? The absence during the Risorgimento of a revolution both in cultural and economic terms along the lines of the French revolution, was for Antonio Gramsci the root cause of the development of the specific form of Italian fascism, compared to the fascist systems that had developed in Germany, Spain and Portugal, or to countries where democracy had survived even through the difficult times of economic crises. As a consequence, national sovereignty did not coincide with popular sovereignty. Italy's problem rested in the absence of a national-popular culture. "In Italy, the term national has a very limited meaning from an ideological point of view, and in any case it does not correspond to *popular* because Italian intellectuals are far from the people, i.e. from the nation, and are on the contrary bound to a cast tradition which has never been broken by a political popular national movement." (Gramsci: 1975, 132). Gramsci compares Italy with France, where the term *national* and the term *popular* (national-popular) have a political meaning: national sovereignty coincides with popular sovereignty.

The question is not new: it appeared when the Italian state was founded; its previous existence explains the late national unification of the peninsula (...) as far as linguistic unity is concerned, the real problem is the intellectual and moral unity of nation and state, searched through language. But the unity of the language is an external and not compelling way to express national unity: it is a consequence and not a cause. (Gramsci: 1975, 134)

Gramsci is very attentive to what he calls 'folkloric culture', the culture of the people, which, in a country like Italy, cannot be reduced to factory workers' culture. The rural world has to be taken into account. He develops this idea of folklore: "as a view of the world and of life, largely implicit, of some classes of the society in opposition to the official views of the world which have followed one another, over history. Folklore can be understood only as a reflect of the living conditions of the people." (Gramsci: 1975, 215)

In the 1950s a few Italian anthropologists developed Gramsci's ideas, adding the concept of progressive folklore, upon which they considered it was possible to build a culture of opposition to the reactionary forced dominating culture. This progressive folklore cannot be divided by local specificities. How can the idea of progressive folklore with a Marxist approach to proletarianisation and modernisation in a rapidly changing Italy be combined with the progressive change from an economy that is still rural to a modern industrial society? The main phenomenon of the time seems to have been industrialisation and class conflict, expressed in the strength of the Communist Party. During the 1970s cultural elements became more present in the struggle for the general emancipation of every minority. Even the Marxist approach paid more attention to cultural aspects. A linguist Tullio De Mauro theorises on the multiplicity of Italian culture, suggesting Italy is a multiplicity of traditions cultures and languages, the polycentrism of towns and villages, local societies and regional areas.

The Italian constitution of 1948

The post-war period saw in better times for minorities in Italy: their rights were progressively recognised even if not uniformly and for all. First, some articles of the Italian Constitution concerning questions of citizens' freedom, local autonomies and linguistic minorities deserve to be analysed. La Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana (The Constitution of the Italian Republic) came into force on 1 January 1948. Its contents begin with the Fundamental Principles which 12 articles in all cover as the bases of the democratic freedoms of the new state. The Italian Constitution belongs to a legal tradition based on an idea of right protecting individuals independently of the community to which they belong. To guarantee their rights, it must protect the social formations, both cultural and religious, which the individuals produce. For this reason, the rights of a person cannot be guaranteed if there is no guarantee also for the milieu where he or she has been socialised. In other words, the protection of the individual rights and of collective rights are interdependent.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution – which are fundamental for the entire question of the discrimination – recognise and guarantee inviolable human rights. Thus art. 2 states that “The Republic recognises and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, as an individual, and of the social groups in which he expresses his personality, and demands the fulfilment of the duties of political, economic and social solidarity” (La Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, 1948, art. 2). Article 3, on the principles of freedom and equality of citizens, deals with the question of differences, including those of religion, language, and race. Article 3 establishes that:

All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social condition. It is the Republic's duty to remove obstacles of an economic and social nature which limit the freedom and equality of citizens, impede the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all

workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.

Article 5 declares that the Republic is one and indivisible and “recognises and promotes local autonomy [...] administrative decentralisation.” (Article 6 concerning linguistic minorities states that “The Republic safeguards linguistic minorities through appropriate measures”).

The Constitution deals with the question of local autonomy in Title V (II), regarding “Regions, Provinces, Municipalities”. It specifies that the regions with particular forms and conditions of autonomy are Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Valle d’Aosta (art. 116). The Constitution regulates the number of senators from these regions (II.I: “Parliament”, art. 57), and the election of the President of the Republic, in which the regions take part “[...] so as to ensure that minorities are represented [...]” (II.II: “The President of the Republic”, art. 83). Finally, art. 9 is important: “Within three years of the implementation of the Constitution, the Republic shall adjust its laws to the needs of local autonomous authorities and to the legislative jurisdiction attributed to the Regions.” “The general provisions of Title V shall apply temporarily [...] to the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia [...], without prejudice to the protection of linguistic minorities in accordance with Article 6” (art. 10 about art. 6 see above). The Catholic Church is the official state religion and “all religious confessions are equally free before the law [...]” (La Costituzione, art. 8). Freedom of religion is also established through article 8, which establishes that all religions (religious confessions) are free before the law. Finally, art. 19 can be considered as the basic norm in matters of religious freedom.

The legal recognition of minorities in Italy

Despite the guarantees offered by the Constitution, the situation of minorities and regional autonomies remained fairly diverse until the end of the 1990s, when a national law was voted. The

ethno-linguistic minorities had already obtained a specific status through the Constitution at the end of the 40s (the South-Tyroleans because of special international interest) remained for many years the only ones to be really protected, others having been abandoned because there was no national legislation in their favour. The question of minorities became important in the public debate during the 1970s, when some minorities mobilised for the recognition of their linguistic and cultural specificity. The debate on the legislation began "at the end of the 1970s, with the writing of Manlio Udina [*Sull'attuazione dell'art. 6 della Costituzione per la tutela delle minoranze linguistiche*¹⁷] on the need to implement the Constitution on the question of linguistic minorities. During the 1980s, various bills and proposals for the implementation of art. 6 [of the Italian Constitution] were put forth." (E. Palici di Suni Prat: 1999, 26) In 1987, the linguist Tullio De Mauro wrote:

Parliament is finally (January 1987) at the point of discussing a bill which, after forty years, implements (with several cautions) art. 6 of our constitution on the protection of the less widespread languages. (De Mauro : 1987, XIV)

His work was published shortly after and too early to testify the abortion of this enthusiastic legislative intention. In 1991 Italy still had no general protection law for its linguistic minorities. Another proposal reached Parliament but not the Senate:

Bill 612 'Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche'¹⁸ met with the same fate. Despite the inflamed critics of some intellectuals, [...] who feared that this measure would encourage 'municipalisms' and 'localisms' [...], the bill was passed in November 1991 to the Chamber by [almost] all the parties [...], but did not succeed in reaching the Senate, owing to the anticipated closing of the legislature. (C. Marta: 1998, 6)

The opposition to a specific law on the protection of minorities had supporters both on the right and the left. In the meantime, thanks to the decentralisation which had begun in the 1960s,

giving progressively more power to the regions, regional laws aimed at the promotion of cultural and linguistic autonomy were implemented during the eighties and the nineties. While the national overall law did not reach Parliament for a debate, many laws aimed at protecting linguistic minorities were voted at the regional level.

The debate on minorities in Italy stimulated some Italian regions to pass specific laws in favour of the Roma and Sinti communities to protect and safeguard their language and culture. They deserve to be mentioned “even if Municipalities all too often show a resistance to their implementation.” (Marta: 1998, 5). Nine Italian regions adopted them, the first being the Veneto Region with its regional law n. 41, entitled “Interventi a tutela della cultura Rom” (Interventions for the protection of the Romani culture), issued on 16 August 1984. In the second half of the 1980s, similar regional laws were passed by the Lazio Region (1985), the autonomous Province of Trent (1985), The Piedmont Region (1986), the Sardinia Region (1988), the autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (1988), the Tuscany Region (1988), the Emilia-Romagna Region (1988), the Lombardy Region (1989). In the next decade, some other regions joined this list, some returning to the subject by renewing their regional laws for Roma and Sinti; the practical results remained almost invisible.

According to several scholars, researchers and social workers dealing with this question, the absence of a global national legislation and policy concerning the Roma/Sinti minority groups and in particular the non-recognition of their language as a minority one, represent the main reasons of their difficult integration in the country’s mainstream society.

The Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region issued the first law on the protection of the linguistic minority in 1988. The other regions followed: the majority of these laws were approved in the 1990s. A list of these laws¹⁹ is presented to show their geographical context with the seven Italian regions; as to their contents, they are usually obvious from their titles:

1. 1988 – the Friuli-Venezia Giulia regional law, 9 March 1988, n. 10, later superseded by the law of 22 March 1996, n. 15: “Regulations for the protection and promotion of the Friulan language and culture, and institution of the service for regional and minority languages”;
2. 1990 – the Piedmont regional law of 10 April 1990, n. 26, amended by the regional law of 17 June 1997, n. 37; with these regulative acts the following languages are protected: Piedmont’s, Occitan, Francoprovenzale and Walser;
3. 1994 – the Veneto regional law, 23 December 1994, n. 73: “Promotion of the Veneto ethnic and linguistic minorities”; with this regulative act the following minority language communities are protected: the Dolomite Ladins of Veneto, the Cimbri and the German-speaking communities of Sappada;
4. 1996 – the Basilicata regional law, 28 March 1996, n. 16: “Promotion and protection of the ethnic-linguistic minorities of Greek-Albanian origin in Basilicata”; in order to improve the law and correct some inaccuracies, as well as to precisely define who the beneficiaries of the law would be, the Region approved a new regional law n. 40, on 3 November 1998: “Regulations for the promotion and protection of the Arbëreshe Communities in Basilicata”;
5. 1997 – the Molise regional law, 14 May 1997, n. 15: “Protection and increase in value of the cultural heritage of the linguistic minorities in Molise”; with this regulative act the Croatian and Albanian languages are protected;
6. 1997 – the Sardinia regional law, 15 October 1997, n. 26: “Promotion and increase in value of the culture and language of Sardinia”;
7. 1998 – the Sicily regional law, 9 October 1998, n. 26: “Measures for the safeguard and increase in value of the historical, cultural and linguistic heritage of the Sicilian communities of Albanian origin and of other linguistic minorities. Contributions to the regional provinces for the direction of university curricula. Increase in the contribution, about which cf. the article 1 of the regional law of the 4 of June 1980, n. 52”.

New developments in minorities policy, law no. 482 (1999)

In the 1990s the interest for minorities became crucial at a European level. Through the Schengen agreement, borders were opened, a fact which implies greater ease of movement but which requires new unitary and local laws towards various types of minorities present in the new European context. Besides national minorities, the transnational minorities became the subject of interest for politicians and scholars. Trans-national minorities (of immigrant origin or not) become pan-European minorities. In Europe, they may (but only may) 'find some homeland'. The international community continued to address the topic through the common European legislation now in force. At this point it appears essential to study the impact of the Italian legislation alongside the European, given that the single member states' legislative bodies are obliged to follow common European legislation.

The situation in Italy had changed greatly: the development of the Northern League movement, which opposes a centralised state and even demands independence for Northern Italy (the Padania area) provoked a large debate on the relevancy of federalism. In this context, the Italian Legislative Chamber finally agreed to pass a law on the specific matter of linguistic minorities: Law 482 of the 15 December 1999, entitled 'Regulations on the Protection of Historical Linguistic Minorities', that is regarding the historical minority languages spoken on the territory of the Italian state. Elisabetta Palici di Suni Prat comments on the current law on linguistic minorities:

The passage of this bill was rather tormented and reflects the contradictions in the evolution of the legislation on the protection of linguistic minorities in Italy. The bill was tabled in the Chamber of Deputies on 9 May 1996 [...], simultaneously with other bills. The text approved by the Commission introduced numerous changes to the original proposal. It went back to the Assembly in May 1998 and [...] there were several amendments before it was approved on 17 June 1998. It went on to the Senate

and on 25 June 1998 [...] to the United Committees for Constitutional Affairs and Public Education, Cultural Heritage, which began to examine it in November 1998. (E. Palici di Suni Prat: 1999, 92-93).

This law recognised 12 linguistic minorities (from 27 recognised by the UNESCO, Fenoglio: 1998, 1), namely: the Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian and Croatian minorities "and [...] those speaking French, Francoprovenzale, Friulan, Ladin, Occitan²⁰ and Sardinian" (Law no. 482, 1999, art. 2, sub-section 1). Briefly, Law 482 regulated, in 20 articles, the following questions: the status of the official language of the Republic, i.e. Italian; populations whose languages and cultures are protected by the Republic with the present law; the territorial borders where this protection of the historical linguistic minorities is applied; the teaching of the protected minority languages; the scientific research, projects and cultural activities aimed at them; the public use of the protected languages protected in communal councils, administrations, courts and other public bodies; toponyms; the recognition and the reinstatement of original names and/or surnames; mass media and radio-television public services in protected minority languages; publishing, the press, private radio-television transmitting stations, as well as associations with the object of safeguarding linguistic minorities; their own legislation; "the creation of special institutes for the protection of linguistic and cultural traditions of populations considered by the present law" (art. 16); the promotion of interregional and border co-operation, mainly with the states "in which citizens of the relative communities have maintained and developed the native socio-cultural and linguistic identity" (art. 19).

There are no specific mention of regions with special status or individual minority communities, the case of the autonomous provinces of Trent and of Bolzano; article 18 specifically deals with these two autonomous provinces. The legislator's solicitude in promoting the protection and safeguard the country's linguistic-cultural peculiarities of historical linguistic minorities is evident, as well as the preoccupation with avoiding damaging

the integrity and autonomy of the regions with special status. On the whole, it is necessary to point out the importance of having at last a law on this specific topic. Even in the present law, recurrent questions remain unsolved both in international and national legislation: the definition of the concept of minority – in this case linguistic – is still missing; the transnational or non-territorial minorities (Roma, Sinti) are ignored. The present law does not recognise Gypsies as a national linguistic minority, despite their longstanding presence in the country. The pretext given is that “their culture lacks a reference to a specific territory” (Bolognesi and Incerti, 1999, 4). This decision is surprising considering that the Romani language is included into the UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages.

Moreover, we must also remember the “*First report on the state of minorities in Italy*”, written by the Ministry of the Interior in 1994, edited by the Central Office for the problems of border zones and of ethnic minorities”. This report was produced with the object of “providing a historical, cultural and social analysis of the situation of each single minority [...] (Ministry of the Interior: 1994, 4).” With this act, the Office tried to “consider cultural diversity not as an element of discrimination, but as a contribution to the richness of the national and European community (id.: 5).” Nevertheless, “the protection of the Gypsies’ diversity [...] is presented as very problematic” (Marta: 1998, 6).

In 2001, the same Office carried out further research which gave rise to a report entitled *Culture and images of linguistic groups of old settlement present in Italy, First report*. The initiative was conceived “with the intention of making known to the youth the diverse reality of the ethnic-linguistic minorities present on the national territory”, as well as to “send out a message of tolerance to the new generations. The research deals with only nine linguistic minorities present in our country: Walser, Mòchen, Cimbris, Carinzians, Occitans, Croats, Catalans, Greeks and Albanians, but the study will be extended to the remaining minorities in the future” (web page of the Central Office for the problems of the border zones and of ethnic minorities, Ministry of the Interior).

Conclusions

Unified Italy has been always characterised by important cultural and linguistic differences, mainly marked through a north-south line. The existence of linguistic territorial minorities has also been an important reality. However, these multiple cultures and internal differences have not prevented an Italian nationalism whose worst expression, fascism, was very hostile towards minorities (and partly responsible of the genocide of the Jews).

Emigration has also been an important element characterising the Italian experience: however, if it has had a certain influence in the legal system (for example the predominance of the *jus sanguinis* over the *jus soli*), it has not been re-elaborated in the construction of national references and identity. The discourse on Italian national identity never takes into account the 'diaspora' and its long history.

Both from the cultural (in terms as well of democratic culture) and legal point of view, the Constitution, produced by the Resistance, seems the highest point of the Unitarian Italian experience. However, the Constitution has not really been completely implemented and is now questioned by the right-wing government. The Law on Minorities of 1999 has arrived late and its implementation risks being delayed by the present government. But this law is far from perfect: the concept of minority is not defined nor, consequently, the relationship between majority and minority.

According to the Gramscian approach, the lack of a common national-popular culture, a common culture deeply immersed in democratic values shared by everybody, the lack of a real cohesion in a country divided by a civil war between 1943-1945, the absence of a deep analysis of the fascist experience (comparable to the work done by Germany, and by France in relation to the Vichy experience), have left a large space for the return of populist politics.

In this context, the question of the minorities and internal minorities and, even more, immigrant minorities, is highly problematic and needs strong monitoring by the European Union

and the International Organisations: Italy is a country 'at risk', despite its position in the European Union, as far as human rights and respect of the European Charter are concerned. Fortunately, the European Parliament seems to have become aware of the various Italian 'issues' (Annual Report of the European Parliament on the situation of basic rights, January 2003).

Notes

- ¹ In October 2000, there were 3,930,499 Italians living abroad who had kept their Italian nationality: 688,120 in Germany, 587,790 in Switzerland, 570,055 in Argentina, 377,777 in France, 306,721 in Brazil (Aire Data, elaborated by Caritas).
- ² The majority of people of Italian origin living abroad are in Latin America: 38.8 million, followed by the United States, 16.1 million.
- ³ To the old Mediterranean culture (which we know little about), we owe viticulture and wine production, as well as the word 'vine', which today is part of the common cultural inheritance but which apparently is derived from one of the ancient Mediterranean idioms.
- ⁴ Or, quoting the linguist Tullio De Mauro on the construction of culture and multinational relations in Italy: "[...] the grandiose Arabic contribution" (T. De Mauro, 1987, p. XV).
- ⁵ Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) was one of the first Italian historians and one of the foremost scholars of his age. He was long archivist and ducal librarian in his native city, Modena. He edited the principal collection of Italian historical documents, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (28 vol., 1723-51), and *Antiquitates Italicae medii aevii* (6 vol., 1738-42). Finally, he wrote a history of Italy from Christian times (12 vol., 1744-49).
- ⁶ Vittorio Alfieri (1749 Asti, Piedmont - 1803, Florence) was an Italian writer - dramatist and poet, author of many tragedies, and one of the leading literary and patriotic figures of modern Italian history. Being very critical of the reality of his time, Alfieri was a man of the Enlightenment (he despised Absolutism), but was also a pre-romantic, putting the individual and his fight for freedom against any political and social constraints at the centre of his literary work. In fact, the heroes of his tragedies have been seen as patriotic heroes.

- ⁷ Goffredo Mameli dei Mannelli (1827-1849) was patriotic student and poet of liberal and republican sentiments, who adhered to Mazzini's ideas in 1847. His life was completely devoted to the Italian cause. In autumn 1847, Mameli wrote the hymn when he was twenty; this hymn was set to music by Michele Novaro a little later, under the title *Canto degli Italiani* (Song of the Italians). The composition was born in a patriotic climate which foreboded the war against Austria. Mameli's hymn became the national anthem of the Italian Republic on 12 October 1946.
- ⁸ It is no coincidence that the leaders of the Northern League, who initially wanted independence and secession (now they are in government, so they no longer ask for such things), speak of a Celtic origin of the *Padani* (Northern Italians). What Bossi calls "*Padania*" (Po Valley) is a territory which, in early Roman times, was divided among different tribes. The Celts, mainly the Gauls, were also part of these tribes. A large part of the Padania was Cisalpine Gaul. The Gauls of northern Italy even defeated the Romans and forced them to pay a high ransom. Later, the Gauls were defeated because the geese of the Capitol woke the soldiers during a surprise attack. Even if they were living in northern Italy, the Gauls were not considered proper ancestors and were presented as barbarians in school books as opposed to the civilised Romans – until the arrival of the Northern League in the political arena. The Romans could be deemed Italians' legitimate ancestors and not the Gauls, who are, in fact, the legitimate ancestors of the French. Now the Northern League organises Celtic festivals all over northern Italy.
- ⁹ Joking about the Italians who in the eighteenth century refused to speak Italian, preferring French, the language of the aristocracy, another poet, Giuseppe Parini, from Milan, wrote about Petrarca's language: "*onde in Valchiusa fu lodata e pianto già la bella francese*" ("when in Valchiusa was praised and bewailed the beautiful French"; vv. 181–182, in 'Il Mattino, poem Il Giorno', G. Parini).
- ¹⁰ This tradition of the 'brain drain' is not over. Even now, the best scholars and thinkers often go to work abroad, considering the provincialism of Italian Academia unbearable.
- ¹¹ In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi led a thousand volunteers from all over Italy to Sicily to fight the Bourbon power in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.
- ¹² Some authors (e.g. S. Salvi, G. Pécout) believe that this celebrated expression on Italy's history is erroneously ascribed to M. D'Azeglio,

while it is possibly said first by the writer of comedies and politician Ferdinando Martini.

- ¹³ The first primary school created in Italy within a public system was in Trieste. It opened in 1786 by the will of Joseph II of Austria. It is one of the oldest primary schools in Europe. The Casati Law was introduced in 1859 in the Piedmont and the rest of the Kingdom.
- ¹⁴ According to the main Gramsci's work on this topic, the essay *Alcuni temi sulla questione meridionale* (Some issues regarding the southern question) from 1926.
- ¹⁵ To give an example, in Montreal, where an important Italian community exists, there is still the House of Italy, built during the fascist period, with the fascist symbols on the walls. Montreal Italians keep such symbols in the interests of historical record.
- ¹⁶ In the racial theories of the world famous Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, Roma and Sinti people were designated as 'a race of criminals', that is a race having an inborn inclination to illegal activities.
- ¹⁷ On the implementation of art. 6 of the Constitution for the protection of linguistic minorities.
- ¹⁸ Regulations on the protection of linguistic minorities.
- ¹⁹ Indications on the subject are taken from the book *Intorno alle minoranze* of E. Palici di Suni Prat (1999), 82–88.
- ²⁰ The language is also called *Provenzale* or (old) *Provençal*.

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