



Tarcento: history

The history of Tarcento predates the oldest documents (12th century) that mention its name by many centuries. In fact, scholars talk of Palaeolithic populations followed by prehistoric and Celtic settlements, and then, naturally, Roman colonisation.

During **Roman times**, due to its geographically strategic position between the settlements of Cividale and Gemona, Tarcento was probably the site of fortifications.

However, we have no records of the town's name until the 12th century, to be precise until 1126, when Tarcento was a **fiefdom belonging to the Machland family** from Perg (Austria).

Evidence remains of two castles dating back to that period: the castle of San Lorenzo, also known as the upper castle, the ruins of which are no longer visible, and the lower castle of Coia, of which the corner of the tower has been preserved, known as Cjcsjelàt (Castellaccio). In 1219, the Machland Lords were replaced by the **di Caporiacco** family. In 1281, Raimondo della Torre, patriarch of Aquileia, assigned the fiefdom to the nobleman Artico di Castel Porpetto. Tarcento remained under the control of the **di Castel Porpetto** family until the rise of Napoleon.

The di Castello family were often at war against the Lords of the time, and Tarcento was subjected to the consequences of such bellicosity several times. Gianfranco di Castello was sentenced to death and beheaded for having taken part in the murder of Bertrando, the patriarch of Aquileia.

The lower castle was demolished in 1352 and later rebuilt using material salvaged from the Castle of San Lorenzo, or the upper castle, which was destroyed in its turn. The Tarcento area was also occupied by the **Venetians** in 1420.

1511 was a particularly dire year for the future "pearl of Friuli": in fact, following the popular uprising which would be remembered as the "Fat Thursday revolt", the castle was set alight by the peasants and, as if that were not enough, it was then half destroyed by a destructive earthquake, which also caused serious damage to many other buildings in the zone.

The di Castello family, which had changed its name to **Frangipane** in the meantime, settled permanently in the valley, building homes for themselves there that have proved decisive to the urban layout of Tarcento. They include the *palazzo di Cornelio Frangipane*, now Villa Pontoni, the *palazzo Frangipane*, now home to the Municipal offices, the *Cristofoli-Mosca building*, opposite Palazzo



Frangipane, the *former magistrate's court* and the former *prison*, demolished after the catastrophic earthquake of 1976. To the east of the latter building stood the great stone gate, rebuilt after the earthquake on the hill that leads up to Villa Pontoni (Via Frangipane). Villa De Rubeis, now Villa Florit, and Villa Angeli are partially excluded from the list of historic homes of the Frangipane family, as they cannot be attributed to the noble house from Tarcento with any degree of certainty.

Taking a step back to the 15th century, we find that from 1356 onwards, the community of Tarcento governed itself through its *Assemblea dei capifamiglia* (*Assembly of heads of family*) or *Vicinìa*, with community rules approved by the Frangipane justice and by Venice.

In the 17th century, the *Vicinìa* was replaced by a *Consiglio di Credenza* (*Council of Trust*), initially formed by 12 members, which were later increased to 30.

Towards the end of the 18th century, also known as the century of enlightenment, the town saw the arrival of the **Napoleonic troops**. In 1797, the French included Tarcento in the district of Gemona, making it the site of the Magistrate's Court. Under **Austrian domination**, Tarcento regained its role of chief town, also becoming the site of the district Commissariat.

In 1866 the town was annexed to the **Kingdom of Italy**, becoming the chief town of an administrative district. During this period, Tarcento experienced considerable economic and cultural growth. The town, located at the mouth of the Torre Valleys, developed its role as a market, especially for the mountainous zone behind it, becoming a famous summer resort for residents of Udine, Trieste, Dalmatia and Venice.

Tarcento took on a particular urban and aesthetic appearance over the turn of the century, with the construction of numerous prestigious buildings (Villa Moretti, Villa delle Rose, Villa Aganoor, etc.), with annexed parks and gardens. The construction of the *textile waste processing plant in Bulfons*, the *Crosis dam* and numerous silk processing *works* also date back to this period, boosting the economic and social development of the town.

During the **First World War**, Tarcento was of considerable logistical importance, given its position behind the front. After the Battle of Caporetto, Tarcento was occupied too, despite the resistance put up by the Alpine units on the Tanamea Pass.

For over thirty years, in between the two wars, the town continued to be a popular tourist destination, helped by the construction of the *Udine-Tarcento tram line* on which the famous "white tram" operated.

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