

## The common language and its varieties

A key feature of Friulian is its «marked archaic and traditional individuality», using the definition by Giovan Battista Pellegrini, illustrious glottologist and editor, inter alia, of the Grand Friulian Historical – Linguistic – Ethnographic Atlas, the first regional linguistic atlas of Italy. This feature, i.e. its «marked archaic individuality», is due to the historical conditions that led the Latin of our region to develop in a relatively autonomous manner compared to other Italian dialects or yet conditions that, however, caused its subsequent departure.

Today, the original alleged unity of Friulian appears fragmented into a series of varieties that, although displaying linguistic traits that are sometimes quite remarkable, do not prevent people from understanding each other. In short, overall it can be easily distinguished from other languages and dialects spoken in the region (as seen earlier on, Italian, Slovene, German and Venetian). The main partition of the Friulian-speaking area is marked by the Tagliamento River, that divides, as it is said, the Friulian on one side of the river and the Friulian on the other side (il furlan di ca e di là da l'aghe), the river that in the past separated the dioceses of Aquileia to the east and Concordia to the west.

And still, from the point of view of dialects, it is customary to distinguish four main groups of Friulian dialects, divided in turn into a number of subvarieties: central Friulian (Udine), eastern Friulian or sonziaco (Gorizia), western Friulian or concordiese (Pordenone), Carnic Friulian (Tolmezzo). Common Friulian (also called koiné, from the Greek koiné glóssa 'common language') developed from the Friulian of the literary tradition of the 19th century (especially Pietro Zorutti and Caterina Percoto) and the 20th century (the group of poets from Risultive, writers Maria Forte, Dino Virgili, Carlo Sgorlon and others). Based on the linguistic work by Giuseppe Marchetti and the dissemination by the mestris di furlan (Friulian teachers) of the Friulian Philological Society, we currently note a trend in the standardization of the language, especially as regards aspects concerning its official spelling set by regional law no. 15/96.