

The first documents in friulian

The knowledge of early Friulian, like that of any other language, starts from the study of the ancient documentary sources; in fact, it is only through these sources that we can follow and reconstruct the evolution of the language over the centuries. Traces of voices or Friulian names in Latin texts of 11th-13th centuries are quite sporadic, on the contrary, in that period in the rest of Italy people start writing in the vernacular (especially in Sicily and Tuscany), whereas a considerable number of Friulian words can be found at the end of the 13th century, especially names of people and places.

Regardless of the presence of precious poetic compositions like the sonnet *E là four del nuestri chiamp* and two ballads, namely *Piruç myo doç inculurit* and *Biello dumnlo di valor*, in the 14th and 15th centuries Friulian becomes the language used to draw up documents 'for practical use', that is administrative, accounting and notarial texts, documents that represent the main sources to acquire knowledge of ancient Friulian.

Many are the scholars and researchers that have studied, starting from the second half of the 19th century, ancient documents in Friulian – suffice to think about Michele Leicht, Vincenzo Joppi, Giovan Battista Corgnali, Giuseppe Marchetti, Giovanni Frau just to mention the most important ones – and many are also the works and contributions published on the topic. However, most of this documentary wealth is still to be examined as, at present, a reliable census of late medieval (14th-15th centuries) written records in Friulian is not yet available, also as regards the main funds of the region – with the important exception of the Municipal Library of Udine. In any case, the creation of a wide corpus of reliable issues of ancient Friulian texts remains imperative and urgent for the entire region, in order to produce broad perspective lexicographic and historical investigation works that have long waited to be initiated or resumed – first of all an etymological dictionary and a historic grammar.