

Thomas Stolz (ed.)

Minor Languages of Europe

A Series of Lectures at the University of Bremen,
April - July 2000

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Georg A. Kaiser, Werner Carigiet & Mike Evans (Konstanz)

Abstract

Las trais gruppas linguisticas numnadas retorumantschas sa mantegnan en il territori tranter il Pass dal Gottard en Svizra e Triest en l'Italia. Il rumantsch dal Grischun, plidà da radund 60'000 persunas en Svizra, chatt'ins oz anc en diversas vals dal chantun Grischun. Il ladin da las Dolomitas vegn plidà da radund 30'000 olmas en tschintg valladas situadas enturn il massiv dal Sella en las Dolomitas talianas. La pli gronda gruppa, cun in dumber da pledaders da radund 800'000 persunas, furman ils Furlans en pliras provinzas da la planira furlana, medemamain en l'Italia.

Gia baud èn las gruppas linguisticas retorumantschas vegnidas separadas entras immigraziuns da populaziuns germanas, sco er tras germanisaziun ed italianisaziun cuntinuada, uschia ch'ellas furman oz damai trais inslas linguisticas tranter l'intschess linguistic tudestg ed il talian. Ultra da quai n'èsi per part betg adina fitg lev d'attribuir a questas gruppas linguisticas tratgs linguistic che lubissan da las distinguer cleramain dals dialects dal nord da l'Italia. Dal puntg da vista sociolinguistic sa distinguan dentant tut las trais gruppas cleramain da las linguas e dals dialects vischinants.

Linguisticamain mussa il rumantsch dal Grischun las pli grondas particularitads. Latiers tutgan tranter auter spezialitads morfosintactic en il sitem da casus ed il sitem pronominal, ed en spezial tar la posiziun dal verb ch'è determinada d'ina stricta posiziun secundara.

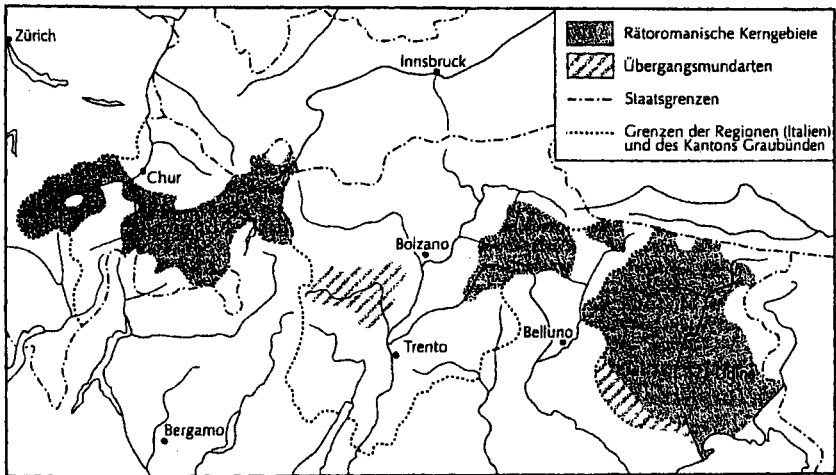
1. Introduction

Any introduction to a scientific paper about Raeto-Romance cannot avoid starting by dealing with the issue known as the "questione ladina" – that is to say, which dialects can be regarded as belonging to this language and the extent to which it is justified at all to speak of an autonomous 'Raeto-Romance language'. This question has been the subject of heated controversy for over a century and it is far from easy to answer. Nor do there appear to be any real prospects of arriving at a consensus to terminate the whole debate, since, from the very beginning, political, ideological and emotional premises have coloured it to such an extent as to jeopardise the chances of a serious scientific discussion (Goebel 1982, 1984, Gsell 1990: 127). To simplify the arguments, it is possible

¹ We should like to express our whole-hearted thanks to Wolfgang Dahmen (Jena) for his valuable comments.

to distinguish two principal opposing schools of thought as far as the “questione ladina” is concerned (cf. Kristol 1998, Liver 1999: 15-28).

The first of these two standpoints goes back to Ascoli (1873) and Gartner (1883) and is based on the assumption that the three regions within the Alps where Raeto-Romance is spoken are related to one another and form one typological linguistic unit, although they are not geographically joined. To list these three territories, they are the Romansh-speaking parts of Canton Graubünden (which is sometimes still alternatively referred to by its French name “Grisons” in English), those that speak Dolomitic Ladin in the Italian Dolomites and the Friulian-speaking parts of Friuli, also in Italy.

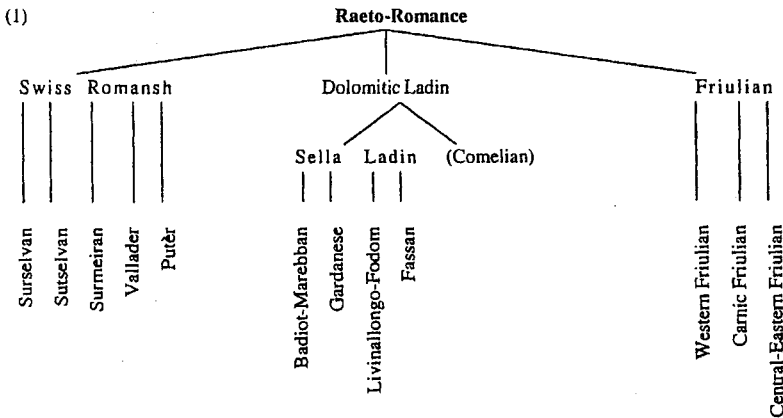


(nach Ladinia 1, 1977)

Fig. 1: The Raeto-Romance language territories as they are today (from: Kristol 1998: 938)

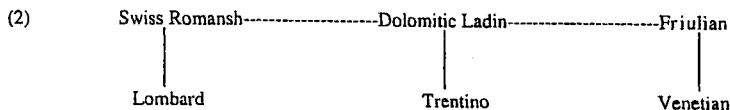
Following on from the ideas of Ascoli (1873), the unity of these three language territories is frequently referred to as the “unità ladina”. However, the use of the adjective *ladino/ladina* is most confusing in this particular context. One reason is the fact that other Romance languages, especially the Jewish language, *ladino*, use this term (see Hetzer, this volume); another reason is that *Ladin* has traditionally been used to designate both the dialects spoken in the Dolomites and those spoken in the Graubünden part of the Inn valley (the Engadin). The term *Raeto-Romance* (frequently written with an extra, non-etymological 'h': *Rhaeto-Romance*), that was coined by Gartner (1883) (ger.

Rätoromanisch, fr. *rhétoroman* or *romanche*), is ambiguous, since both in everyday usage and in linguistic writings, there is a general tendency for it to be restricted solely to the dialects spoken in Canton Graubünden (Liver 1999). This is especially the case in Switzerland itself. The term is also problematical on account of its reference to the Raetian people and their language and/or to the Roman Province of *Raetia*. Neither of these is really accurate, since, firstly, if there is any Raetian substrate at all (Gsell 1997: 136, Krefeld 2001), then there is only evidence of it for part of the Raeto-Romance language territory, and, secondly, the Roman province of Raetia only covered the western part of the Raeto-Romance language territory (Richebuono 1980, Kristol 1998: 938ff.). For this selfsame reason, other designations, such as "Raeto-Friulian" (Bec 1971, Francescato 1982) or "Alpine Romansh" (Gamillscheg 1948, Schürri 1963), that have occasionally been put forward as alternatives are equally unsatisfactory (Messner 1980:11, Kristol 1998:940) and have thus never become established. For all these reasons, we have thus decided to continue to adhere to the term "Raeto-Romance" that is broadly established in Romance Linguistics and to use it here as an umbrella term for all three language territories: Swiss Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian. It can be further divided into the following subdialects (cf. Holtus and Kramer 1986: 5, Frau 1984: 14ff., Kattenbusch 1996: 313):



Proponents of the second standpoint, on the other hand, build on the assumption that the common linguistic features of the three language territories are limited to very few characteristics and that these are, at all events, less numerous than the aspects that these dialects share with their neighbouring Northern Italian dialects (Pellegrini 1972, Kramer 1986, Tuttle 1989). The most extreme position of this viewpoint, which is no longer

really considered today (cf. Kramer 1989: 579), states that all the Raeto-Romance dialects are just regional variants of these other dialects (Battisti 1931). This perception can be summed up in the following diagram, in which the continuous lines symbolise stronger links than the dotted ones (Haiman and Benincà 1992: 25):



This view has a political dimension to it, in that it was exploited by Italian nationalists to stake Italy's claims to the Alto Adige/South Tyrol as well as to Swiss territories and to try and underpin them. It need thus come as no surprise that the discussion surrounding the linguistic unity of the Raeto-Romance language territories has been a very emotional one (and, in part, still is). In Switzerland, it was one of the contributory factors that led to a national-referendum vote in 1938 granting Swiss Romansh the status of the country's fourth national language by a large majority, thereby giving it an official demarcation line compared with Italian (Catrina 1983: 30-34, Goebel 1984b: 230).

Linguistically the answer to the issue of the unity of the Raeto-Romance language territories is highly controversial. It involves the question as to, firstly, whether it is possible to connect these language territories to one another by discerning certain characteristics in common and, secondly, whether it is possible to establish characteristics that distinguish between them and the neighbouring Northern Italian dialects. According to Liver (1999: 23ff., 2000: 215), of all the rather heterogeneous lists of criteria put forward by proponents of the linguistic unity of the Raeto-Romance language territories, there are no more than three constant linguistic characteristics that can be distinguished, that all three Raeto-Romance dialect groups have in common and that delimit these vis-à-vis the adjacent Northern Italian dialects (cf. Redfern 1971: 28, Haiman and Benincà 1992: 65, 75).

1) The (far-reaching) maintenance of the Latin '-s' ending as a plural marker in the flexion of nouns and adjectives as well as for marking the second person singular and plural in verbal morphology (cf. Kristol 1998: 942, Tekavčić 1981: 273):

Latin		Swiss Romansh	Dolomitic Ladin	Friulian	English
<i>stella</i>	sg.	<i>staila</i>	<i>štéra</i>	<i>štéle</i>	'star'
	pl.	<i>stailas</i>	<i>štéras</i>	<i>štéles</i>	'stars'

Latin	Swiss Romansh	Dolomitic Ladin	Friulian	English
<i>lavas</i>	<i>lavas</i>	<i>lâs</i>	<i>lâves</i>	'(you) wash' (sg.)
<i>lavatis</i>	<i>lavais</i>	<i>laéis</i>	<i>lavâis</i>	'(you) wash' (pl.)

2) The maintenance of the Latin '-l' following the initial consonants of words (cf. Kuen 1968: 50, Kristol 1998: 942):

Latin	Swiss Romansh	Dolomitic Ladin	Friulian	English
<i>clavis</i>	<i>clav</i>	<i>ilé</i>	<i>cláf</i>	'key'
<i>flamma</i>	<i>flomna</i>	<i>fláma</i>	<i>flame</i>	'flame'
<i>plenus</i>	<i>plain</i>	<i>plen</i>	<i>plen</i>	'full'

3) The palatalisation of Latin *c* and *g* before *a* (cf. Lang 1982: 214-218, Kristol 1998: 944):

Latin	Swiss Romansh	Dolomitic Ladin	Friulian	English
<i>calida</i>	<i>chauda</i>	<i>čálda</i>	<i>čálde</i>	'warm' (fem.)
<i>gattu</i>	<i>giat</i>	<i>iat (giat)</i>	<i>gjat</i>	'cat'

The existence of these three properties is clear evidence of the close affinity of the Raeto-Romance dialects to the Gallo-Romance languages (cf. French. *étoiles, laves/lavez, clé, flamme, plein, chaud, chat*). Justification for considering the Raeto-Romance dialects to be independent compared with these languages includes the fact that these three characteristics have so far been maintained more or less intact (Kristol 1998: 943). Taking French by way of example, the terminal '-s' was lost from the spoken language back in the Middle Ages and has only survived in particular syntactic positions and in individual words (fr. [etwal], [lav] / [lave]). The Gallo-Italian dialects of Northern Italy, that were originally also characterised by these features to differing degrees, have now almost entirely lost them – probably primarily on account of the levelling influence of standard Italian with its marked Tuscan bias (Schmid 1956: 67ff., Kuen 1982: 508ff., Kristol 1998:943, Liver 2000:215). A similar situation can be observed as far as the lexicon is concerned too, where it is possible to produce evidence of numerous uniform traits of the three dialect groups (Kuen 1968, Krefeld 1994, Gsell 1997). Rohlfs (1981:20) identifies such uniform lexemes throughout the Raeto-Romance territories for 'sun', 'grain sifter' and 'spoon', whereas – so he indicates – the Northern Italian dialects only have terms that correspond to those of standard Italian:

Swiss Romansh	Dolomitic Ladin	Friulian	Italian	English
<i>sulegl</i>	<i>surëdl (sorogle)</i>	<i>soreli</i>	<i>sole</i>	'sun'
<i>dratg</i>	<i>dra (drei)</i>	<i>draz</i>	<i>crivello</i>	'grain sifter'
<i>tshadùn</i>	<i>sciadón</i>	<i>sedón</i>	<i>cucchiaio</i>	'spoon'

Rohlfs, however, leaves open the question as to whether the Northern Italian dialects used to have such lexemes at some time in the past that corresponded to the Raeto-Romance dialects. In point of fact, there are many instances in which it can be shown that lexemes that only occur in the Raeto-Romance language territories (or parts there-

of) were originally present in the Northern Italian dialects and have even survived to the present in marginal regions (Tagliavini 1998: 306ff., Goebel 1984a:I: 114-121). In other words: just like the typological comparisons regarding the morpho-phonological peculiarities, such comparisons of lexemes permit particular autonomous features of Raeto-Romance to be worked out – if only from a *synchronic* point of view (Bec 1971: 316, Kuen 1982: 509). It is worth making the general remark that Swiss Romansh displays the largest number of peculiarities, whilst Friulian is seen to have the largest number of parallels with the neighbouring Northern Italian dialects. It is worth noting that even *within* the individual dialect groups there are differences in this respect. It emerges that the westernmost dialect of Swiss Romansh – Sursilvan – has the most striking peculiarities and thus shares far fewer common linguistic features with the Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian dialects than do the eastern dialects of Swiss Romansh (Krefeld 1994: 271). In other words, if we take a synchronic view of the situation then we are quite evidently dealing with a continuum of dialects, stretching from southeast Switzerland through to Friuli and displaying the greatest originality compared with the neighbouring dialects and the interspersed Northern Italian ones in its westernmost margins (Redfern 1971, Kuen 1982: 509, Goebel 1989: 746, Kristol 1998: 945ff.).

Now it would appear to be a futile exercise to discuss whether these synchronic linguistic findings go far enough to justify speaking of an “*unità ladina*” of the three Raeto-Romance dialect territories and make it possible to postulate a clear demarcation between these dialects and the Northern Italian ones (Schorta 1959: 63). If, instead of that, we look at the situation from a socio-linguistic vantage point, then no doubt exists whatsoever that the Raeto-Romance dialects must be granted a particular status. For the inhabitants of these language territories have regarded themselves as the embodiment of a particular type of language extending back to time immemorial. Evidence of this is to be found, for instance, in the designations they have themselves for their dialects (Holtus & Kramer 1986: 5) and also in the fact that they have been using their language as a written one for a long time too (Rohlf's 1981: 21). At this point, however, the fact that the individual dialect groups (and their subgroups) have **differing** designations and that **different** written languages have evolved suggests that, in the case of “Raeto-Romance”, we are **not** dealing with a uniform language. Moreover, another consideration that also militates against the assumption of a **uniform** Raeto-Romance language is that there is only a limited scope of mutual comprehension between speakers from the three dialect territories and that even **within** each particular dialect

territory comprehension difficulties can certainly arise too. One historical explanation amongst others as to why a uniform language never emerged is that the three Raeto-Romance language territories at no time formed a political unit, nor did they ever share a common intellectual/cultural centre (Schür 1963: 125ff.). The same also applies for those individual dialect territories in which no prominent centres emerged which could have radiated their influence on language development (Rohlf 1975: 5). This has led to a state of affairs in which speakers are first and foremost aware of the exclusivity of their own **local** dialects, restricted, as they are, to very limited regions, and the sentiment of belonging linguistically to one of the three Raeto-Romance dialect groups tends to be very much of secondary importance and has indeed only crystallised in the recent past. There is, however, virtually no feeling of belongingness transcending the three dialect groups. Viewed from a socio-linguistic perspective, in other words, it is no doubt justified on the basis of linguistic factors to draw a line between the Raeto-Romance dialects and the neighbouring Italian ones and also to subdivide them into three large dialect groups, although, inversely, it is not possible to justify the postulation of a single common Raeto-Romance language on the basis of these factors.

This fact is also mirrored in the way in which modern science has dealt with the Raeto-Romance dialects. Amongst the work dealing with Raeto-Romance today, it is a rare exception to find a comparative approach; most authors deal with only one of the three dialect groups or even with only one of their subgroups. Evidence of this is to be found in the by-now very numerous and repeatedly revised research compendia and bibliographies (Decurtins 1964, Holtus & Kramer 1986, Pellegrini 1991 or, most recently, Holtus & Kramer 1997, Siller-Runggaldier & Videsott 1998). These also make it clear that the literature dealing with the Raeto-Romance dialects has now become so broad-ranging that it is almost impossible to maintain an overview of it. For that reason, for the purposes of the following overview of the peculiarities of Raeto-Romance – both those external and internal to the language – we have been forced to make a selection and to concentrate primarily on one of the three dialect groups. Their choice fell on Swiss Romansh or “*Rumantsch*” as it calls itself in its standardised version, which – as already touched on – displays the largest number of peculiarities within the Raeto-Romance language group and also distinguishes itself more markedly from the neighbouring Romance languages and dialects. For this reason, the following section contains only a cursory view of the most important socio-linguistic facts concerning Friulian and Dolomitic Ladin. This is then followed by a more detailed presentation of

the most important facets – both external and internal to the language – that concern the Raeto-Romance dialects that are spoken in the Swiss canton of Graubünden.

2. External factors

A situation that is typical for many so-called small languages can be observed in the case of Raeto-Romance too: virtually without exception, all the speakers of one of the Raeto-Romance dialects are bilingual or multilingual and also bidialectal or multidialectal. They have more or less a good mastery of a standard version of their country's national language(s) and/or one or several variants of the regional dialects adjacent to their own (Kristol 1989: 816, Posner & Rogers 1993, Carigiet 2000: 235, Frau 1984: 9). It is self-evident that in such circumstances it is extremely difficult to produce accurate statistics for the number of speakers of the Raeto-Romance dialects (Haiman & Benincà 1992: 18). This is reflected in the massive scatter in published figures. The most extreme ranges concern the number of speakers of Friulian: they fall somewhere within a bracket of 400,000 to a million (Benincà & Haiman 1992: 18). Frau (1984: 8) reports on a figure of more than 525,000 native Friulian speakers that emerged in a 1975 survey, but at the same time draws attention to its numerous inaccuracies. At all events, Friulian has the largest number of speakers – and that by a big margin. The smallest group is formed by the speakers of Dolomitic Ladin, with approximately 25,000–30,000 speakers (Kattenbusch 1996: 314). The number of speakers of Swiss Romansh is estimated to be in the approximate range of 50,000–60,000 (cf. section 2.3 for more details).

2.1. *Friulian*

Friulian is spoken predominantly in the Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, in the provinces of Udine, Pordenone and Gorizia as well as in the Veneto region, in a small district around Portogruaro (Posner & Rogers 1993: 243, Vanelli 1997: 279). Friulian is generally divided into the three dialects Carnic Friulian, Central-Eastern Friulian and Western Friulian, each of which can be further subdivided into numerous subdialects (Francescato 1966, Posner & Rogers 1993: 243; Frau 1984: 14ff.). Central-Eastern Friulian is the most widespread variety, and its principal dialect, Central Friulian, serves as a

“koine friulana” which is also used for official and literary purposes (Frau 1984: 14, Vanelli 1997: 279). The most innovative dialect is Western Friulian, which has been subject to the strongest influences from the Venetan dialects and in whose marginal regions Venetan has become completely established (Frau 1984: 8, Lüdtke 1957). A special position is occupied by the dialect of Erto (and Casso), which is spoken in the Vajónt Valley and which displays numerous particularities on account of its geographically isolated situation (Gartner 1892, Francescato 1963, Francescato 1979). In the towns and urban centres, such as Udine, Gorizia or Cervignano, Friulian has now been largely displaced by Venetian. The principal cause of this is that Friulian tends to be regarded as rural and thus enjoys relatively little prestige in urbanised society. With the exceptions of these municipal centres and its marginal territories, Friulian has otherwise maintained a high level of vitality in its other regions according to Frau (1984: 9). Amongst the reasons put forward by Frau are that urbanism and industrialisation have so far played no more than a minor role within the Friulian language territory, so that rural structures have remained more or less intact, and there has been no large-scale emigration to the industrial centres.

2.2. *Dolomitic Ladin*

Dolomitic Ladin is comprised of dialects, each one of which has a territory limited to a small valley or even just a side valley in the Dolomitic Alps. One source of confusion in describing these dialects is the fact that, in part, the names given to these valleys in the corresponding dialects in the various languages vary greatly from one another and that, as far as some of the dialects are concerned, it is a very debatable point as to whether they can be considered as belonging to Dolomitic Ladin at all. The most important dialects of Dolomitic Ladin are those that are spoken in the four valleys that fan out from the Sella Massif:

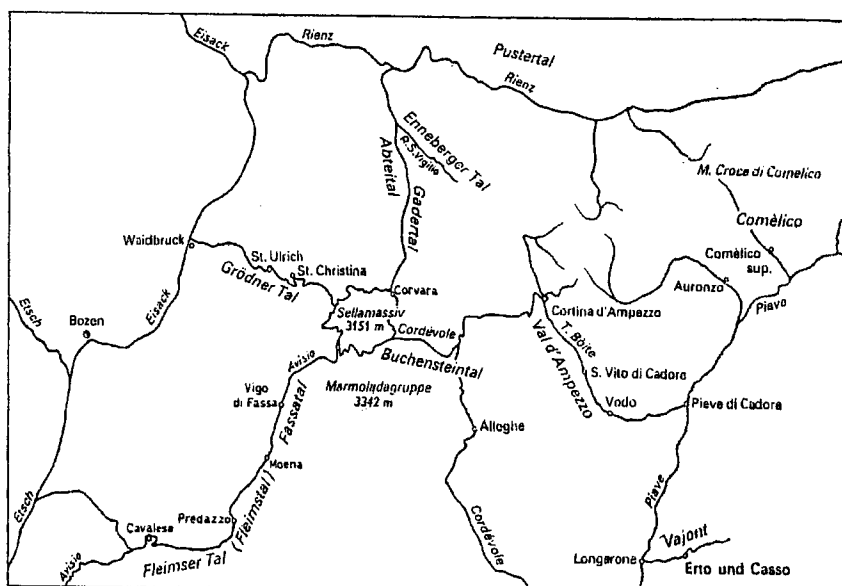


Fig.2: Sketch map of the Raeto-Romance valleys in the Dolomites (Tagliavini 1998: 304)

These dialects are *Gardanese* (rae. *gherdëina*, ger. *Grödnertisch*, it. *gardenese*) that is spoken in the *Gherdëina* Valley (ger. *Grödnertal*, it. *Gardena*), *Badiot-Marebban* (rae. *marèo* and *badiòt*, ger. *Gadertalisch*, subdivided into *Ennebergisch* and *Abteitalisch*, (it. *marebbano* and *badiotto*), that is spoken in the *Val Badia* (ger. *Gadertal*, it. *Valle di Badia*) and its side valley, the *Val Marèo* (ger. *Ennebergtal*, it. *Marebbe*), *Fassan* (rae. *fašàn*, ger. *Fassanisch*, it. *fassano*), that is spoken in the *Fascia* Valley (ger. *Fassatal*, it. *Val di Fasa*) and *Livinallogo-Fodom* (rae. *fodòm*, ger. *Buchensteinisch*, it. *livinallongese*), that is spoken in the *Fodòm* Valley (ger. *Buchensteintal*, it. *Livinallongo*) (Holtus and Kramer 1986:5, Kramer 1986:603). On occasions, *Ampezzan* is also included; this dialect is spoken in the *Val d'Ampezzo*, a valley that does not spread out directly from the *Sella Massif*, but which has very close historical and cultural ties with it (Kattenbusch 1988:13). It is, however, a place that has experienced an intensive immigration of Italian speakers, one reason for which was the Winter Olympics held in its principal town, *Cortina d'Ampezzo*, in 1956, and the effect of this has been to displace *Ampezzan* to a large degree. The dialects spoken in the southwestern valleys of *Val di Non* (ger. *Nonsberg*) and *Val di Sole* (ger. *Sulzberg*) do still display certain cha-

characteristics of Dolomitic Ladin, but they are to be viewed as varieties of Trentino (Tagliavini 1998: 305). Some authors consider *Comelian* (rae. *comelgo*, it. *comèlico*), which is spoken in the eastern Dolomites, to be a dialect of Dolomitic Ladin, although they do not justify this point of view in any real detail (Kattenbusch 1996, Kristol 1998, Tagliavini 1998: 305).

The use and vitality of the individual dialects of Dolomitic Ladin vary greatly from one valley to another. One reason for this is that the indigenous dialects have very different legal statuses. Despite the historical/cultural ties that bind the Sella valleys as a result of the many centuries they belonged to Austria, they are today divided for administrative and political purposes over three different Italian provinces (Bolzano/Bozen, Trieste and Belluno) and are thus subject to totally different legislative environments concerning their use and teaching (Kattenbusch 1996). Quite apart from this phenomenon, the twentieth century, however, saw a decline in the use of Dolomitic Ladin in all its territories. One decisive reason for this has been tourism, which, on the one hand, of course, has meant that the Ladin population was not forced to emigrate, but, on the other hand, has also attracted immigrants with no command of Dolomitic Ladin (Kattenbusch 1996: 317).

2.3. Swiss Romansh

In deciding to use the term "Raeto-Romance" to apply to all the dialects that can be considered as belonging to the language, we ought to use a different term when considering only the dialects spoken in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. As explained above, when the Swiss themselves (especially those from outside of Graubünden) use the term they tend to mean only the Raeto-Romance dialects spoken in Switzerland. A survey of academic and popular writings in English reveals that a dozen or so different terms had been applied to these dialects seen as a group. The commonest term is "Romansh" (sometimes with the word "Swiss" in front of it); some authors prefer to keep the word "*Rumantsch*" (or other dialect versions of it, especially "*Romonsch*") in English; yet others consider the German term "*Bündnerromanisch*" to be the most precise one.

Traditionally, Swiss Romansh is divided into five "dialects", which are referred to as "idioms" in everyday parlance. Speakers of the language make frequent use of the term

“idiom” amongst themselves in order to distinguish their own spoken and written variety of the language from a “dialect”, which they regard as a spoken (sub)variety only. It can reasonably be assumed that the speakers of an idiom are aware that it forms just part of a higher-order, more-embracing language, but they feel they owe their primary allegiance to their own idiom and its tradition as a written language. The five idioms all have more or less standardised forms and long traditions; they are used in primary schools as the language of tuition in the individual districts. In turn, the idioms are subdivided into numerous smaller dialects. *Sursilvan* (rae. *Sursilvan*, ger. *Surselvisch*) is the name given to the Romansh dialect that is spoken in an area known as Surselva (ger. *Bündner Oberland*). Its highest and most westerly point is the Oberalp Pass, and it extends eastward from there down the valley of the Vorderrhein (rae. *Rain anteriur*) to the confluence of the “two Rhines” in Reichenau, including the side valleys too. The valley of the Hinterrhein (rae. *Rain posteriur*) includes the territory of *Sutsilvan* (rae. *sutsilvan*, ger. *Sutselvisch*), an idiom whose territory has, however, shrunk to just a few remnants. Along with *Surmiran* (rae. *surmiran*, ger. *Surmeirisch*), that is spoken in Oberhalbstein (rae. *Surmeir*) and the Albula Valley, it forms a sort of bridge between Sursilvan and the two dialects of the Inn Valley (the Engadin): *Putèr*, which is spoken in the Upper Engadin, and *Vallader*, which is spoken in the Lower Engadin. As can be seen from the outline map, it is the Sursilvan and Vallader dialects that still occupy the most extensive territories and which also still have the largest numbers of speakers – by a big margin:

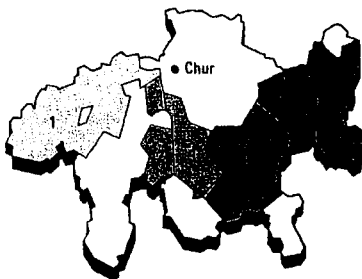


Fig. 3a: *The five idioms of Swiss Romance:*
 1. Sursilvan 2. Sutsilvan 3. Surmiran
 4. Putèr 5. Vallader
 (Lia Rumantscha 1996: 23)

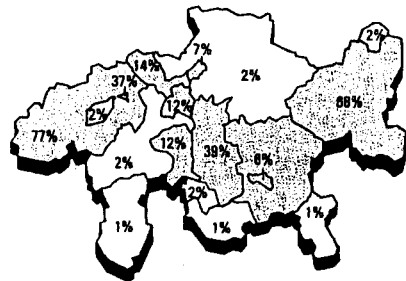


Fig. 3b: *Number of speakers indicating Swiss Romance as the language of which they have the best command in the 1990 national census*
 (Lia Rumantscha 1996: 26)

According to the figures produced by the 1990 population census, just under 30,000 people living in Graubünden indicated that “Raeto-Romance” was the language of which they had the best command, which corresponds to around 18% of the canton's total population. To this figure should be added another 10,000 or so Swiss Romansh speakers living in other parts of Switzerland. It is interesting to consider the responses given to another question that was asked for the first time in the 1990 census: namely the language people effectively use. A different picture emerges here, and the number of Romansh speakers turns out to be considerably higher at 41,092 for the whole of Canton Graubünden (around 25% of the overall population) along with 25,264 spread over the rest of Switzerland. That adds up to a grand total of 66,356 speakers of the Graubünden varieties of Swiss Romansh (compared with only 39,632 speakers who indicate it as their “best language”).

Switzerland has been carrying out population censuses regularly since 1880, and the figures produced show that the absolute number of speakers of Romansh has remained relatively constant over the past hundred years. This is illustrated in the following overview of the language situation in Canton Graubünden (cf. Pedretti 2000: 270 for a presentation of the situation prevailing throughout Switzerland):

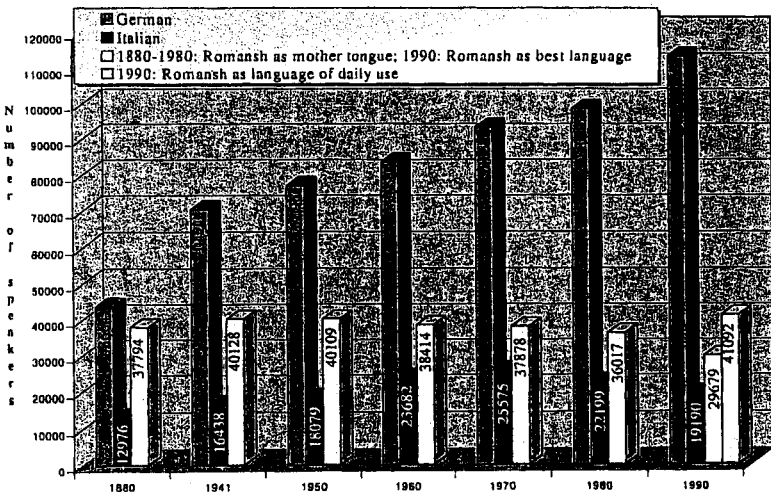


Fig. 4: Language situation in Graubünden (according to Lia Rumantscha 1996: 22)

However, a really massive deterioration is to be observed if we compare the development in the number of speakers of Romansh with the trend in the number of German speakers. German is seen to have gained ground continuously, the consequence of which has been that the **percentage** of Romansh speakers has declined markedly (Diekmann 1996, Di Luzio 1977). Back in 1880, still 40% or so of the population of Graubünden spoke Swiss Romansh, whereas this figure had shrunk to 18% or 25% (depending on the criterion) by 1990. In other words, the percentage of Romansh speakers was more or less halved between 1880 and 1990. It is also worth noting that it is not only the **percentage** of speakers of Swiss Romansh that has declined; the **territory** on which the language is spoken has also shrunk continuously in the course of the past hundred years (cf. Billigmeier 1979: 158-163):

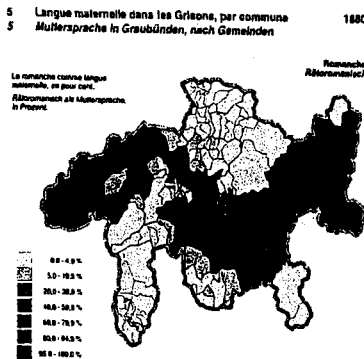


Fig. 5a: People indicating 'Swiss Romance' as their native tongue (1880) (Furer 1996: Appendix)

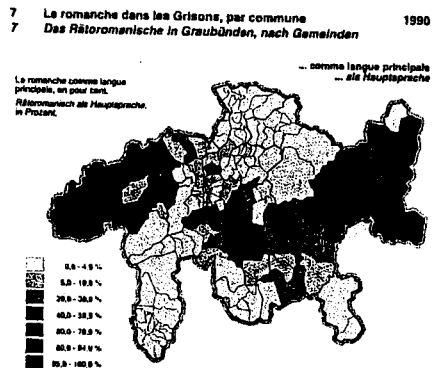


Fig. 5b: People indicating 'Swiss Romance' as their main language (1990) (Furer 1996: Appendix)

A comparison of these two maps shows clearly the way the language territories on which Raeto-Romance is spoken in Graubünden has been declining. They also illustrate clearly that back in 1880 all the Swiss Romansh territories still formed a single **uninterrupted** expanse, whereas that was no longer the case by 1990.

Another point that cannot escape attention is that this decline in Swiss Romansh was observed at a time during which the language's legal situation experienced very considerable improvements. Going back in history, during the period following the integration of Raetia in the Kingdom of the Franks, the traditional Raeto-Romance language territory had German-speaking Alemannic feudal lords and vassals imposed on it, and the language used for all official purposes throughout the territory shifted from Latin to

German. There was no change in this particular phenomenon when, starting in the fifteenth century, at the time the Leagues were created, indigenous families took over the regency. The principal of trilingualism was first proclaimed in 1794 in what at the time was still the Free State of the Three Leagues; this principal was maintained in the new canton in 1803 when Graubünden (as it was renamed) became a member of the Swiss Confederation. At central (i.e. federal) level, Swiss Romansh was not recognised at all to begin with (Lia Rumantscha 1996: 15-18). It was during the period of the German Romantic movement that various intellectuals from the Swiss-Romansh-speaking parts of Graubünden imported the idea into their canton that indigenous, farming and rural traditions, along with their languages and popular culture, ought to be objects of veneration. Half way through the nineteenth century, this movement, which was driven by strong personalities, led to the phenomenon of the *renaschientscha rumantscha*, (the so-called "Raeto-Romance Renaissance"). This was followed during the period 1885-1921 by the setting up of various Raeto-Romance language and cultural associations, including the "Societad Retorumantscha" (1885) and the "Lia Rumantscha" (1919). The latter still exists today and acts as the umbrella organisation for language and cultural associations dealing with Raeto-Romance in Graubünden; it is supported out of public funds. When primary schools were introduced around 1850, the Raeto-Romance language territories in Graubünden received their own school system, which has aimed to build on the Raeto-Romance language to establish Romansh/German bilingualism; actually, it started to do so long before any comparable efforts were made in this direction (Cathomas & Carigiet 1997: 65-69). A referendum held in 1938 recognised Romansh as a Swiss national language. Another national referendum held in 1996 went further and recognised it as an official language of the Swiss Confederation to be used in communications with Romansh speakers (Pedretti 2000: 305).

Without doubt, a major problem standing in the way of consolidating the legal situation of Raeto-Romance in Graubünden is the fact that it is split into five written idioms. Up until around the time of writing, the cantonal authorities had used the two most widely-spoken idioms, Sursilvan and Vallader, for communication with the Romansh-speaking population. The three smaller idioms, Putèr, Surmiran and Sutsilvan, were thus not used as official languages by the canton, although these regions did maintain Romansh-medium primary schools using their local idioms, for which the canton, moreover, was required to provide teaching materials (Lia Rumantscha 1996: 42). In 1982, Heinrich Schmid was given a contract by the Lia Rumantscha to draw up **guide-**

lines for the creation of a standardised written language for the Rhaeto-Romance of Graubünden, to be called "*Rumantsch Grischun*" (Schmid 1982, Darms 1985, 1989, Hölker 1990). In the course of the years that followed, Schmid's work was used as a basis for formulating a koine, for producing manuals, generating texts and much more beside. It was in 1986 that the Swiss Confederation first used *Rumantsch Grischun* in its communications with the Romansh-speaking population (Lia Rumantscha 1996: 59). However, the expansion and use of *Rumantsch Grischun* triggered a great deal of polemic, some of it pretty fierce, and so the Graubünden cantonal government decided to launch a broadly based survey into its acceptance (Gloor et al. 1996). The positive results this survey produced led to *Rumantsch Grischun* gaining ground. Currently, efforts are underway to make *Rumantsch Grischun* into an official language at cantonal level and also to introduce it in schools, where it is to build further on the existing regional idioms.

The primary schools (which children generally attend for six years: from the age of six to twelve) are, however, currently still using their own particular regional idioms. Apart from a number of educational experiments, there have so far been two basic types of primary school. The first type, usually known in Graubünden by the German acronym 'RUS' (*Romanisch als Unterrichtssprache*), is the Romansh-medium school. The other type of primary school is known as 'RUF' (*Romanisch als Unterrichtsfach*); these are German-medium schools, which offer their pupils an additional two or three Romansh lessons per week in addition to the syllabus offered at other (pure) German-medium schools throughout the canton. For more than 150 years, the bilingual school of the first ('RUS') type, has represented a functioning, bilingual immersion model. Although mainstream research has so far paid little attention to them, these schools can be seen as one of the most important guarantors for maintaining Raeto-Romance in Graubünden (Cathomas & Carigiet 1997: 65-69, Gurtner, Cathomas & Carigiet 1998). One thing they do is to convey the linguistic basics for as many facets of daily life as possible, thereby preventing *Rumantsch* from retreating into the family/informal ghetto and being banished from public life. The other thing they do is to optimise as far as possible the process of learning the *lingua franca*, without which the economic survival of Raeto-Romance speakers in Graubünden would be put at jeopardy. Empirical investigations have shown that, regardless of their background and native tongue, pupils attending this type of school are bilingual, and their German-language skills are practically at the same level as that of their contemporaries attending the all-German schools.

However, the survey also showed that these results concerning language skills, motivation and attitudes towards the language are only in evidence up until the end of primary school. As young people move on to secondary/intermediate school (where most tuition is German-medium), a decline starts to set in, and Romansh loses more ground still when they enter the world of work which is very much dominated by German (Cathomas & Carigiet 1997: 65-69).

3. Internal factors

Our brief analysis of the debate surrounding the “questione ladina” with which we started this article showed that the Raeto-Romance dialects do demonstrate certain characteristic features **in common** which set them apart from the neighbouring Northern Italian dialects, but that these characteristics manifest themselves in markedly different ways in the individual dialects. It is the westernmost Graubünden dialect of Raeto-Romance, Sursilvan, that shows the most conspicuous peculiarities within the Raeto-Romance language group, and these also make it stand out, synchronously speaking, within the whole community of the Romance languages. In the following presentation of the internal aspects of the Raeto-Romance dialects, the aim is thus to focus on certain linguistic particularities of Sursilvan.

To a large extent, Sursilvan shares three of the **morpho-phonological** characteristics that are regarded as constant throughout the Raeto-Romance dialects. It is only the general palatalisation of the initial Latin *k* before *a* that is not observed by the majority of Sursilvan speakers, although this feature is to be found in some of its dialectal variants. In most versions of Sursilvan, this palatalisation only occurs in those words in which the initial Latin *ka-* was in the stressed syllable (compare the two Sursilvan words: *tgaun* ‘dog’ and *caval* ‘horse’) (Schmid 1956: 56). As regards the final *-s* in Latin, it can be observed that in Sursilvan it has not only been maintained in the plural marker of nouns and adjectives and the morphology of verbs, but is also used to mark adjectives and participles used predicatively (in the masculine singular). There is thus a morphological distinction between the attributive and predicative use of such adjectives and participles (Liver 2000: 216):

- (3) (a) *Il mir alv*
 the wall white
 'the white wall'
- (b) *Il mir ei alvs*
 the wall is white
- (4) (a) *Igl onn vargau*
 the year passed
 'the year gone by'/'last year'
- (b) *Igl onn ei vargaus*
 the year is passed
 'the year has gone by'

It would appear that this *-s* ending is a relict of the Latin nominative, that was still present in early Gallo-Romance and that was generally abandoned in favour of the accusative (cf. lat. *albus* > surs. *alvs* vs. lat. *album* > surs. *alv*) (Liver 2000: 216).

Incidentally, Sursilvan also shows an interesting **contrasting** trend in the masculine plural of (weak) participles used as adjectives or nouns. Here, it has maintained the Latin nominative *i*-ending, whereas most modern Romance languages (and other varieties of Raeto-Romance) have maintained the Latin *-s* accusative ending (Liver 1995, 1999: 168):

- (5) (a) *igl emploiau – ils emploiai* (f. *emploiadas*)
 the employee the employees
- (b) *cumprau – cumprai* (f. *cumpradas*)
 bought (sg.) bought (pl.)

Typologically, however, the most striking particularities of Sursilvan are to be found in its syntax. Strangely, most descriptive works dealing with Sursilvan (or more generally with the Graubünden versions of Raeto-Romance) at best only mention these peculiarities in passing (Tekavčić 1981, Liver 2000) and some do not even mention them at all (Stimm & Linder 1989). This is particularly astonishing, because it is especially in its syntax that Sursilvan (sometimes in the company of the other Raeto-Romance dialects of Graubünden) displays features that clearly set it apart from all other Romance languages.

Typologically, there is, without doubt, one really outstanding peculiarity of Sursilvan: the verb-second property, i.e. the requirement for the finite verb in declarative main clauses to come as the second constituent, whereby the first constituent may be a single word, a phrase or even one or several subordinate clauses. This verbal position is completely independent of prosodic, pragmatic and/or stylistic factors as well as the syntactical function or category of the sentence's initial constituent:

- (6) (a) *La dunna scriva oz ina brev agl um*
 the woman writes today a letter to-the man
- (b) *Oz scriva la dunna ina brev agl um*
 today writes the woman a letter to-the man
- (b') **Oz la dunna scriva ina brev agl um*
 today the woman writes a letter to-the man
- (c) *Ina brev scriva la dunna oz agl um*
 a letter writes the woman today to-the man
- (c') **Ina brev la dunna scriva oz agl um*
 a letter the woman writes today to-the man
- (d) *Aggl um scriva la dunna oz ina brev*
 to-the man writes the woman today a letter
- (d') **Aggl um la dunna scriva oz ina brev*
 to-the man the woman writes today a letter
- (e) *Sch'ella ha temps, scriva la dunna oz ina brev agl um*
 if she has time writes the woman today a letter to-the man
- (e') **Sch'ella ha temps, la dunna scriva oz ina brev agl um*
 if she has time the woman writes today a letter to-the man

As is widely known, this phenomenon (which should not be confused with inversion as a means of indicating an interrogative clause – which is used in the Raeto-Romance dialects too) is one of the typical syntactical properties of all Germanic languages, except modern English. The obvious conclusion would seem to be that its existence in all the Graubünden variants of Raeto-Romance is to be ascribed to their contact with German (Rohlf's 1952: 203, Arquin 1975: 87, Kuen 1978: 46, Linder 1987: 95, Oetzel 1992: 19). However, there would appear to be one clear argument against this assumption, namely that this feature is to be found not only in Sursilvan, which has had the longest and closest contacts with German, but also in the other Swiss-Romance dialects,

especially those of the Engadin, where German influences were much weaker than in the other Romansh-speaking parts of Graubünden (Diekmann 1981); the “verb-second principle” is the general rule there too – and it always has been as far as documentary evidence goes back. It is interesting that this “verb-second-rule” is to be observed in Dolomitic Ladin too (Benincà 1985/86, Haiman & Benincà 1992: 167-175, Salvi 1997, Manzini and Savoia 1998, Poletto 1998), although not in Friulian (Vanelli 1997). Here, however, there are differences **within** the dialects of Dolomitic Ladin: whereas Badiot-Marebban and Gardanese are characterised by the regular application of the “verb-second-rule”, that does not apply to its other dialects. Once again, it seems evident to ascribe this difference to the influence of German, since both these valleys in which Badiot-Marebban and Gardanese are spoken are enclaves within German-speaking territory, whereas the other Dolomitic-Ladin valleys are (and have been) subject to a stronger influence from Italian (Linder 1987: 95). Benincà (1985/86), on the other hand, does not regard the requirement to make the finite verb the second constituent of sentences in Raeto-Romance as having been triggered by German. Her view is that this is a relict of a grammatical rule that was originally generally applicable throughout the Romance languages in the Early Middle Ages and which had generally been lost by the end of the Middle Ages. Benincà nonetheless concedes that contact with German could have contributed to preventing the loss of this “verb-second-order”.

Another peculiarity that characterises Sursilvan typologically is to be found in its system of personal pronouns, which is summarised in table 1 (cf. Widmer 1959, Linder 1987: 2-162, Spescha 1989: 332-336, Ebnetter 1994: 745-788):

	subject pronouns		object pronouns			
	non-clitic	clitic	direct		indirect	
			non-clitic	clitic	non-clitic	clitic
1sg.	<i>jeu</i>	-u	<i>mei</i>	-	<i>a mi / (ad ani)</i>	<i>(mi)</i>
2sg.	<i>ti</i>	-	<i>tei</i>	-	<i>a ti / (ad ati)</i>	<i>(ti)</i>
3sg.	<i>el, ella</i> <i>ei, igl</i> <i>ins</i>	-l, -la i, -i, -gl -s, -sa	<i>el, ella</i> <i>ei</i> <i>ins</i>	-	<i>ad el, ad ella / ((a)lidel, (a)lidella</i> <i>agli</i> <i>ad ins</i>	<i>(gli)</i>
1pl.	<i>nus</i>	-s, -sa	<i>nus</i>	-	<i>a nus / (ad nus)</i>	<i>(nus)</i>
2pl.	<i>vus</i>	-	<i>vus</i>	-	<i>a vus / (ad vus)</i>	<i>(vus)</i>
3pl.	<i>els, ellas</i> <i>ei</i>	-las -i	<i>els, ellas</i>	-	<i>ad els, ad ellas / ((a)lidels, (a)lidellas</i>	-

Table 1: The Sursilvan personal pronouns

In the literature, there are strongly diverging indications regarding the forms of the personal pronouns in Sursilvan and the way they are used. One explanation for this is that certain dialectal differences exist **within** Sursilvan. One feature to be observed in all

varieties of Sursilvan as spoken today is that the clitic object pronouns are hardly used any more. Old Sursilvan, on the other hand, used to have both direct and indirect (pro-)clitic forms of object pronouns. In modern Sursilvan, proclitic forms of the indirect object might just still be found in literary writings. The spoken language uses the non-clitic pronoun forms instead, and these are placed in the same position as noun objects. In this point, Sursilvan stands apart not only from all other dialects of Raeto-Romance inside and outside of Graubünden (Widmer 1959), but also from all the other Romance languages. Without exception, these are characterised by the existence of two morphologically distinct series of object pronouns, compared with which only isolated clitic pronouns occur in the Germanic languages and they are generally not morphologically distinct (Cardinaletti 1999). Once again, this seems to point to a parallel between German and Sursilvan. A similar situation holds true for the forms and use of the subject pronouns. Contrary to French and the neighbouring Northern Italian dialects, Sursilvan does not have a double series of subject pronouns (nor do the other Graubünden dialects of Raeto-Romance). The clitic forms listed in Table 1 are just reduction forms, that, virtually without exception, are only possible in a post-verbal position. Similar to the practice of the Southern German and Swiss German dialects, it is possible to omit the pronoun altogether when referring to the second person singular. However, there is one difference compared with German, namely that the pronoun designating the second person **plural** can be omitted too (Spescha 1989: 334 and 544):

- (7) (a) *Oz fas quella lavur.*
 today make-2sg this work
- (b) *Canteis lu in tec en uorden?*
 Sing-2pl then a bit accurately

Another very clear difference between the pronoun system of Sursilvan and that of German is to be observed in the reflexive pronouns. Here, Sursilvan has both a clitic and a non-clitic series of forms. What is particular about Sursilvan is that its clitic reflexive pronouns do not vary according to person and number, but always maintain the same form 'se' for **all** grammatical persons (Stimm 1973). The following example shows the paradigm for *selavar* 'to wash oneself', along with the optional, non-clitic reflexive form, which is used for added emphasis (Ureland 1982: 181):

- (8) (a) *jeu selavel (mei)*
 (b) *ti selavas (ti)*
 (c) *el/ella selava (el/ela) (sesez/sesezza)*
 (d) *nus selavein (nus)*
 (e) *vus selaveis (vus)*
 (f) *els/ellas selavan (sesezs/sesezzas)*

Here again, Sursilvan displays a particular feature that distinguishes it clearly not only from all the other dialects of Swiss Romance and of Raeto-Romance as a whole, but also from all the other Romance languages and from German as well.

4. Prospects and concluding summary

This article has shown that the dialects that are regarded as belonging to Raeto-Romance display numerous features in common, which more or less distinguish them from the neighbouring dialects of Northern Italy. At the same time, it has also been clearly demonstrated that the Raeto-Romance dialects diverge strongly from one another. This marked dialectal fragmentation is a phenomenon that is typical for many small languages. Another typical aspect is the absence of a supra-regional standardisation of the language. Even within the three big dialect groups, attempts at establishing uniformity and/or standards have to date achieved no more than partial successes, and it is indeed very much open to doubt whether such attempts at standardisation will ever really succeed and be able to contribute to halting the decline in the dialects (Kramer 1986, Hölker 1990). As already indicated, one decisive reason for the absence of common standards is the fact that no regional politico-cultural centres ever established themselves, from where such standardisation could have radiated. In the case of the Raeto-Romance spoken in Graubünden, the capital city, Chur, would have been able to assume this function. However, it was destroyed in a large fire in 1464. In the process of rebuilding it, it was Alemannic (German-speaking) tradesmen who played a decisive role, which led to a shift in the language majority in the city. This caused the regionalisation of Swiss Romansh and to the emergence of various regional written idioms, with some of their differences relating to religious denomination (Dahmen 1990). German became more and more the *lingua franca* – even between Raeto-Romance people of different idioms. Although Raeto-Romance speakers formed the majority on the territory of

Graubünden until about half way through the nineteenth century, their language never even came anywhere near to having a commensurate function.

More recently, it has been other factors that have been eroding the geographic extent of Raeto-Romance and jeopardising its preservation. They include emigration of the indigenous population for economic reasons and the growth in the non-Raeto-Romance-speaking population. In this context, tourism plays a central role in large parts of the Raeto-Romance language territory (Catrina 1983: 72-87). On the one hand, it provides a livelihood for a considerable part of the population, thereby decelerating emigration, on the other hand, it encourages immigration and the constant presence of people of other tongues on the Raeto-Romance territories. This is leading more and more to a displacement of Raeto-Romance as the everyday language in such territories, reducing its usage to the family and private sphere. Probably one of the most important factors for the decline in Raeto-Romance is the lack of pressure on immigrants to assimilate, since there is no need for them to adapt linguistically – and, to date, there has hardly be any means for them to do so either. The continued existence of the dialects of Raeto-Romance thus depends first and foremost on the readiness and willingness of their speakers to hand their native tongue down as such from one generation to the next.

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Further information:

In addition to consulting the many conventional written sources, information about the various forms of Raeto-Romance is also available via the Internet. For Swiss Romance, visit www.romansh.com, for Dolomitic Ladin, www.istladin.net, for Friulian, www.friul.it/index.html.