

A Crisis in Swiss Pluralism

Contributions to the Sociology of Language

26

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Editor

A Crisis in Swiss Pluralism

*The Romansh and their relations with
the German- and Italian-Swiss
in the perspective of a millennium*

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A mia cara mumma tgi ha
implantau en ses affons
l'amur pil Grischun e
la faviala romontscha.

Preface

In one of the first articles ever contributed to the meager literature in English devoted to the Romansh people of Switzerland, Watson Kirkconnel (1937, p. 25) introduced the little-known subject with the announcement of a fateful verdict, 'Among the rocky valleys of the Eastern Alps, a strange language is slowly dying.' The verdict which he pronounced — and many have pronounced it before him and after — is valid at least in its application to the historical evolution of the Raeto-Romanic people since the Middle Ages. It would be premature, however, to accept a death sentence as the inevitable destiny of the Romansh language and culture.

The Romansh inhabitants of eastern Switzerland, the most distinctive of the contemporary Raeto-Romans, are among the last remnants of a far vaster population that once inhabited the territory extending from southern Germany to the shores of the Adriatic. The language which was the chief common characteristic of the Raeto-Romanic population evolved from the popular tongue of the Romans who conquered the territory and remained to make the region a part of their empire. The Romansh language, like English, came to display in time the marks of a mixed ancestry compounded of Latin and Germanic elements. But unlike the English assimilation of the Norman invaders, the Raeto-Romans were successful in resisting absorption by migrating Germanic tribes in only a few sheltered fastnesses of the once-extensive territory.

If it is too much to say that the last remaining segments of the Romansh community in Switzerland are dying, it can certainly be said that they are engaged in a mortal struggle against persistent, indeed seemingly inexorable, forces which work to obliterate their identity as a distinct cultural group. The final conclusion to the dramatic struggle for survival will not be written by the generation now living — it may well take centuries to resolve. In the end, the Romansh community may be wholly absorbed by German-Swiss culture. Related Raeto-Romanic peoples, like the Friulians in Italy, being even more exposed to de-

ethnization, are even more likely to be absorbed by the larger cultural community surrounding them. It may well be that the balance of critical factors may shift and that the attachment of the Romansh to their language and culture will be preserved indefinitely in the congenial environment of multilingual Switzerland.

Many of the factors which positively and negatively affect the survival of the language and culture of the Romansh in Switzerland have been experienced by other peoples, especially by numerically small groups — fragmented 'nationalities' — surrounded by more powerful neighbors: the Basques in Spain and France, the Bretons in Brittany, the Flemings in Belgium, the Lapps on the northern periphery of Europe, the Kutzo-Vlachs among many others in eastern Europe, the Wends or Lusatian Sorbs in Saxony, the Masurians of what was formerly East Prussia (to cite only a few examples from this and other generations).

In some respects the position of the Romansh in Switzerland is dissimilar to that of some other small ethnic groups. The Romansh, in the first place, have lived in a social and political environment notably free from the conflicts usually present in states which are linguistically heterogeneous. The Swiss justifiably take great pride in the unique reconciliation they have achieved between political unity and regional diversity. The sane federative polity of Switzerland has made it possible for a people divided into four language communities to form a strong national bond based upon mutual trust and understanding. The Romansh who constitute less than one percent of the population, like the Swiss of French and Italian speech, cannot properly be considered ethnic minorities except in the statistical sense. The Swiss share human frailties; in the practical application of the cherished principle of cultural and linguistic pluralism some defects manifestly exist, as is reflected in dissatisfaction among segments of French-speaking Jurasians in the predominantly German-speaking canton of Bern. Traditions have emerged and are sustained by consensus that are antithetical to the conception of inter-ethnic relationships associated with the term 'minority'. Few of the German-Swiss, who represent almost three-quarters of the national population, would aspire to live in a Switzerland where only their language was spoken or where their proportion in the population would grow larger.

In many areas of Europe systematic discrimination and force have been applied against subject minorities to realize ambitions of national homogeneity and to destroy any internal diversity that appeared to threaten societal cohesion. In contrast, in Switzerland, as a national community formed of four linguistic/cultural populations, pluralism has an imperative national value. It is, indeed, more important than just

that. Its successful application in the life of the Republic is seen as providing a lesson for mankind that must be learned if social peace and order are ultimately to be achieved. Victor Hugo once said that, in history, Switzerland would have the last word. Pluralism is seen, finally, not just as a value or as an historical achievement or as the *raison d'être* of national existence but as something that provides the means by which the people of the Swiss Republic may surmount the limitations inherent in membership in a single ethnic group and gain access to additional cultural influences. Pluralism to the Swiss has far greater scope and dimension than is generally attached to 'tolerance' of ethnic differences.

Pluralism, however, even with the vigor of national consensus and the solidity provided by long tradition, cannot guarantee the stable balance of the component linguistic/cultural groups in Swiss society. Patterns of language use and the cultural behaviors reflected in ethnicity are sensitive to social change, especially in the realm of economic and demographic movements. The relative positions of the German- and French-speaking groups in Swiss society are generally regarded as stable. More vulnerable in the contemporary milieu are the two smaller language groups, the Romansh and the Italian Swiss (differentiating the latter from the numerous foreign workers from Italy). Both groups have been weakened in their relative positions by the degree to which their members have been drawn into the German-Swiss culture community. Such tendencies are important also in the implications they have for the balance of relationships between the German- and French-speaking communities.

Among the key factors in the reconciliation of ethnic and linguistic diversity with unity and stability in modern Switzerland have been the traditions of democracy as well as of cantonal and local autonomy. These traditions have made it possible for people differing in language, religion, and culture to preserve their distinctiveness and regional attachments and yet harmonize local with national interests. Another important factor in the harmony within Swiss diversity lies in the fact that the four language divisions cut across religious divisions and, moreover, do not always correspond with patterns of distribution of certain other significant aspects of culture.

Expressing the pluralistic values and widely-held concern for language/culture balance in the country, the Swiss government has engaged extensively in planning and legislative action designed to aid the weaker ethnic groups. In doing this the Swiss government has been guided by cultural leaders and cultural organizations as well as by cantonal and local officials. The perspectives of Romansh actively concerned with sustaining their language and culture reflect the Swiss cultural and political milieux. In the most general terms, the matter of

Romansh survival as a community is generally defined as depending upon the behavior of the individual Romansh in responding to social change, on the economic, cultural, linguistic choices he makes in daily life and upon the strength of the individual's sense of a Romansh-Swiss identity. The enemy, the imperilling factors, are impersonal social forces rather than the German- or French-speaking Swiss. In the final analysis, however, Romansh 'nativists' say with the comic strip character Pogo, 'We have met the enemy and he is us!'

Most of the Swiss cantons are composed of people predominantly of one mother-tongue. The cantons of Bern, Fribourg, and Valais, however, have significant populations of both French- and German-speakers. Only one canton, Graubünden, has three language communities: German, Romansh, and Italian, listed in order of size. It is the only canton in which Romansh is spoken. Graubünden which, before Napoleon forced its unification with Switzerland, was the independent Republic of the Three Leagues is the largest and least densely settled of the Swiss cantons. In its geography and population it is also the most diverse. It is, indeed, a Switzerland in miniature.

The Romansh are not a people without a national history. For centuries they were the numerically-predominant cultural community in the Republic of the Three Leagues.

The account which follows is a longitudinal study of language behavior and ethnicity in the Bündner valleys along the upper Rhine and Inn Rivers. Here multi-lingualism and a richly diverse ethnicity may be studied in social contexts extending over a thousand years of complex historical change.

In this enterprise I am intent upon relating interests which fall within the domains of both inter-ethnic studies and the sociology of language. Many years of arduous but gratifying labor have been spent in studying regional history in order to provide materials appropriate to describe the context of language and cultural behavior in this region over the course of centuries. Part of the motivation for these efforts has arisen out of the conviction that sociological inquiry into these fields has lacked the advantage that fuller social-historical study can provide, especially in the form of longitudinal studies.

The study of ethnicity and language behavior by American social scientists has been understandably pre-occupied with immigrant experience (free, indentured, and slave). 'In general,' Joshua Fishman (1972, p. 59) writes, 'we know (or suspect) much more about the dynamics of language maintenance and language shift in the American immigrant contact situation than we do about these processes in settings involving indigenous populations utilizing more equally 'official'



Map 1. Language regions of Switzerland 1960

languages (e.g., Riksmaal-Landsmaal, Spanish-Guarani, Schwyzer-tütsch-Romansh, etc.)’ ‘This imbalance,’ he adds, ‘has resulted in a skewing of conclusions and concepts among students of language maintenance and language shift.’ Similarly, inquiries in ethnicity here and elsewhere have been skewed by the fact that scholars’ perspectives have tended to reflect inter-ethnic relations in their own national communities.

There are other serious limitations. The present, the contemporaneous, exercises a tyranny over our perceptions of the past and even our scholarly scrutinies are molded by our contemporary interests. Moreover the relevance of the past to the present for that reason is often poorly understood. This study is directed toward the challenge of the myth of the unchangingness of peasant societies. The way in which the pace of social change and the nature of change are perceived depend upon the phenomena we hold under scrutiny and the milestones we set up to gauge alterations in milieu and behavior.

Many European scholars over the past one hundred years and more have been attracted to the study of the Romansh language. Many have been intrigued into exploring its relationship to other surviving descendants of Latin: French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal, Catalan, Romanian and Sardinian. To many, Romansh has had the mystical appeal of the exotic, alpine remnant of an ancient, half-forgotten Latinity whose precious survival outside the museum is an almost lost cause.

This author has also felt that attraction. Indeed, I can make no pretense at approaching the study of language and ethnicity in ancient Raetia and modern Graubünden without the intrusion of personal values and attachments. Part of my family descends from both German- and Romansh-speaking Bündners. I cannot remember the point in my early childhood when I first became aware of the Romansh and the precarious hold their language and culture have upon time. The first specific memory is of challenging my third grade teacher in geography for misinforming the class that there were three [not four!] language groups in Switzerland, failing to include Romansh language and culture and the Walser-German dialect of Graubünden. While much attention is given here to the incredible complexities of language planning in that region, I have not — despite my values and attachments — engaged myself in language planning or social engineering directly (except for a few literary translations).

Table 1. *The Population of Switzerland in 1970: by Mother Tongue and Citizenship*¹

Mother Tongue	Total Population	Swiss Citizens	Non-Citizens
All languages	6,269,783	5,189,707	1,080,076
German	4,071,289	3,864,684	206,605
French	1,134,010	1,045,091	88,819
Italian	743,160	207,557	536,203
Romansh	50,339	49,455	884
Other languages	270,385	22,920	247,465

¹ Eidgenössisches Statistisches Amt (1974, Vol. 4).

Table 2. *Total Swiss Population (Citizen and Non-Citizen) by Language, 1880-1970*¹

Year	German	French	Italian	Romansh	Others
1880	71.3	21.4	5.7	1.4	.2
1888	71.4	21.8	5.3	1.3	.2
1900	69.7	22.0	6.7	1.2	.4
1910	69.1	21.1	8.1	1.1	.6
1920	70.9	21.3	6.1	1.1	.6
1930	71.9	20.4	6.0	1.1	.6
1941	72.6	20.7	5.2	1.1	.4
1950	72.1	20.3	5.9	1.0	.7
1960	69.3	18.9	9.5	.9	1.4
1970	64.9	18.1	11.9	.8	4.3

¹ Eidgenössisches Statistisches Amt. (1974, Vol. 4, p. 114).

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

To me belong these rocks, this stony soil
Here I walk with a firm foot,
For this is the earth of my fathers,
And for it I owe homage to no man.

These fields and these meadows
Belong to me alone
As a free citizen I exercise my rights,
I am king over my inheritance.

Here are my children confided to me by God
It is my blood that flows in their veins,
It is my bread that nourishes them,
It is under my roof they repose.

O free, O gentle simplicity,
Richest treasure of my fathers
With joy would I sacrifice myself to thee,
Even to the last drop of my blood

Free I came into the world,
Free I have labored for my daily bread,
Free, too, I sleep under the eternal stars
And free will I take the hand of death.

Gion Antoni Huonder (1824–1867)
Il Pur Suveran

The Raeto-Romanic people of Switzerland share a linguistic designation with the Ladins of the Dolomites and Friulians in the Italian province of Udine. The 'Raeto-Romanic' territory lies on the alpine watershed of the North Sea (Albula-Rhine), the Black Sea (Inn-Danube), and the Mediterranean (Etsch-Adda). Historical circumstances have left the people geographically dispersed among many alpine valleys in the gnarled terrain of the region without the necessary elements of social

cohesion to bind them into unity. Throughout their history, political circumstances have been such that these Romanized 'Raetians' never developed a sense of linguistic and cultural relatedness. They never possessed a political organization of their own, nor have they, since the time of Charlemagne, even been included in the same state. The widely separated valleys in which the language is or has been spoken — each with its own strong local attachments — have always been attached to the domains of different regional rulers.

Even among geographically proximate valleys, dialects differ substantially and there is no common written language by which a mutually intelligible literary tradition could be founded. Even a common name for the language itself did not emerge among the scattered fragments of the ancient linguistic community. Because some of the dialects fall within the ancient Roman province of Raetia, the term Raeto-Romanic is now generally used to describe the whole complex of dialects, although areas embraced by ancient Noricum and Vindelicum are included.¹

The general area in which the Raeto-Romanic peoples are found lies along the borderlines between Switzerland, the former Austrian territory of the South Tirol and northeastern Italy adjacent to Yugoslavia. Historical migrations and language change have created Raeto-Romanic enclaves in predominantly German and Italian speech areas and, contrariwise, German and Italian enclaves in predominantly Raeto-Romanic regions (Körting 1884, v. 3, pp. 752-783). The actual delineation of the linguistic borders and the specific classification of these linguistically fragmented peoples is made more difficult by the fact that the Raeto-Romanic idiom in a number of areas is in a transitional state due to linguistic influences and population movements from neighboring speech communities. It is not, therefore, always easy to ascertain whether local speech may be properly classified as Raeto-Romanic, Lombardic or Venetian (Redfern 1971). In some communities the idioms are so mixed that classification is more a matter of personal preference than scientific determination, although contending scholars often take unequivocal positions. The fact must also be stressed that the linguistic frontiers are continually shifting in favor of German in some areas and Italian or Italian dialects in others — to the detriment of Raeto-Romanic speech communities in both cases.

1. Ernst Gamillscheg (1935, pp. 267-306) uses the term Alpine-Romanic (*Alpenromanisch*). He objects to the use of Raeto-Romanic as a general designation because that term does not describe properly the broad territoriality of the widely-dispersed linguistic communities. He maintains that his term is more accurate. There are, as he admits, Italian and French dialects in alpine valleys, but the central focus of these other language communities, in each case, lies well outside the alpine region. Pierre Bec (1971, v. 2, p. 472) uses the general designation *rheto-friolan* for the broad speech community.

The complex of dialects combined under the designation 'Raeto-Romanic' is generally described by a threefold classification:

1. *Western Romansh (or Western Ladin)*²

This is the strongest Raeto-Romanic group in the sense that its unique character has been most fully elaborated and most extensively preserved. The Romansh — approximately fifty thousand of them — live in the canton of Graubünden in southeastern Switzerland.³ They are distributed along the upper reaches of the Rhine above the cantonal capital of Chur and in the Engadine Valley from Punt Martina (Martinsbruck) on the Austrian frontier to the source of the Inn River.

2. *Central Ladin (or Ladin of the Dolomites)*

The Ladin people of the Dolomites form an archipelago of scattered remnants of the ancient Romanized population who have preserved their identity in the upper portions of a number of alpine valleys. Areas in which Ladin is spoken, or has been spoken in recent times, include the upper reaches of five neighboring valleys which radiate from the Sella group of the Dolomites: Val Gardeina (Grödnertal), Val Gadera (Gadertal) and Abtei and Enneberg, Val de Fassa (Fassatal), Livinallunga (Buchenstein), and Ampezzo (Ampezzotal). All of these valleys belonged to the Austrian South Tirol before 1918 but were ceded to Italy by the treaties which followed both world conflicts; the cession was made over the protests of the Ladin population (along with German-speaking Tiroleans) which desired to preserve political connections with Austria. The maintenance of their cultural identity has generally seemed to the Ladins to be compatible with the preservation of a strong South Tirolean regionalism.

To the south lie other valleys which have remained Raeto-Romanic or partially Raeto-Romanic into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the

2. The word 'Romansh' is generally used among the Raeto-Romans of Graubünden to describe their idiom. There are variations according to local idioms, thus Romontsch, Rumantsch, and Rumauntsch. The people of the Engadine use the term as the collective designation for all the dialects of Graubünden and employ the term 'Ladin' specifically for the forms used in the Inn Valley.

3. The German form of the canton's name is used rather than alternative forms, e.g., French, Grisons; Romansh, Grischun; Italian, Grigione. The canton is predominantly German-speaking now.

idioms of the upper Noce (Nonsberg) and the Val di Sol (Sulzberg), Judicaria (around San Lorenzo) and others. There are grave controversies concerning the 'Ladinity' of these idioms; some scholars, among them C. Battisti and C. Salvioni, emphasize their close association with Italian dialects. Others argue that although these idioms now lack the *s* plural, one of the principal distinguishing features of Ladin, they should, on the basis of other characteristics, be included with the Central Ladin language group (Politzer 1967).

Long completely Germanized is the once Romanic Vinschgau on the Upper Etch/Adige, adjacent, in its uppermost reaches, to the Swiss Val Müstair (Münstertal) which retains its Romansh character in full flower today.

Unlike the Romansh of Switzerland whose consciousness of ethnic identity emerged many centuries ago, there was little sense of a common identity among the Central Ladin people (even in the Dolomite complex) until well into the nineteenth century, although sentiments of local valley identity were strong. Italian nationalist impulses during the fascist period were not in themselves effective in reducing the Ladin population. The fact that the Ladin valleys are overwhelmingly rural rendered governmental efforts less effective although population erosion has continued for other reasons. At present the Ladin cultural life and sense of ethnic unity are impaired by Italian political and administrative arrangements which divide them among the provinces of Trento, Belluno, and Bozen/Bolzano. (Pfaundler 1967, Kramer 1975, pp. 101ff.) Recently organizations like the *Union di Ladins* in Fassa and other similar organizations have become more active; in 1972, for example, an inter-valley organization was formed, the *Union generale di Ladins dla Dolomites* which publishes the monthly periodical *La usc di Ladins* [The Voice of the Ladins] (Plangg 1973, 1969, pp. 174-175).

3. *Friulian*

The Friulian idioms are spoken by approximately 450,000 people in the province of Udine. Friulian, although numerically the largest of the Raeto-Romanic dialects, has been subjected to strong Venetic influences. (Gartner 1883, 1892 v. 16, Ascoli 1873.) The dimensions of linguistic relatedness within the Raeto-Romanic language family, or specifically between the Friulians and the Romansh at the extremities of its territories, have attracted considerable scholarly attention. On a very practical level, a recent information sheet seeking Swiss volunteers to participate in rebuilding dwellings in earthquake-damaged areas of

Friulia, disposed of the question of the mutual intelligibility of dialects with the simple, matter-of-fact announcement: 'Romansh-speaking people understand Friulian, the mother-tongue of the 700,000 Friulians.' (Aebi and Aebli 1977.)⁴

Among the Romansh of Graubünden, the broad distinctions made between the speech forms of the Rhine Valley and the Inn Valley serve only very general purposes. Finer distinctions are conventionally made which reflect the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity within the relatively small but geographically-fragmented territory. These reflect not only linguistic differences in themselves but also certain distinctions in religious, social, and cultural traditions.

In the uppermost portion of the narrow Inn Valley lies the Upper Engadine (*Engiadin'ota*) whose written and spoken form of Romansh-Ladin is called *Putér*. Bergün/Bravuogn across the Albula Pass also uses *Putér* as its written language: neighboring Filisur has been completely Germanized for several generations.

In the Lower Engadine (*Engiadina bassa*) the people speak and write the regional Ladin variant *Vallader*; closely related to it is the Ladin of the Val Müster over the Ofen/Fuorn Pass and bordering on the Vinchgau of northern Italy.

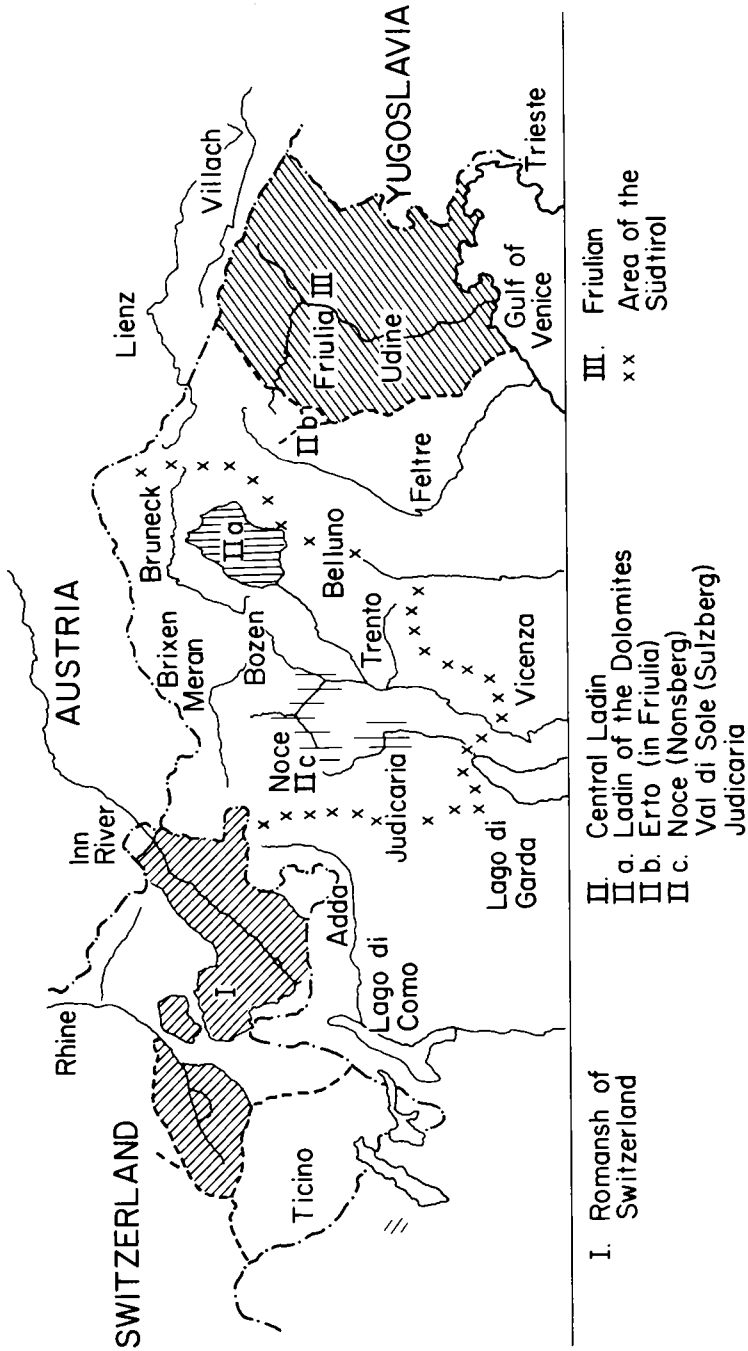
Surselva (the Bündner Oberland), lying along the upper extremity of the Rhine (Vorderrheintal), is the largest and most compact of Bündner Romansh territories. Its spoken and literary form, called Sursilvan, not only serves this area but has traditionally been widely used as the written form for most of central portions of Romansh Graubünden.

In central Graubünden along the Rhine tributary of the Hinterrhein lies the area of Sutselva (literally, below the forest) including the villages of Heinzenberg (*Muntogna*) and Domleschg (*Tumliasca*) and, above the Via Mala gorge, Schamsertal (*Val da Schons*). This area is characterized by a very advanced stage of Germanization. Attached linguistically to Sutselva although clearly transitional between Sutselva and Surselva is the small but strategically important area of the Plaun (*Imboden*).

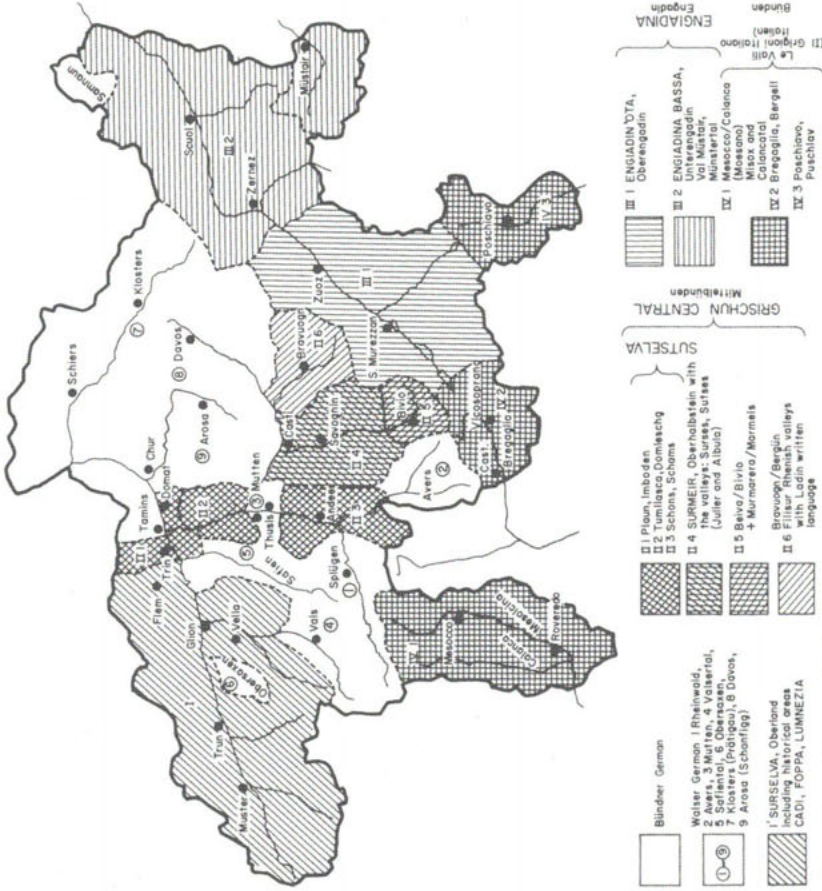
Surmeir (*Oberhalbstein*) along the Gelgia and Albula Rivers in central Graubünden has strong religious ties with Surselva: Sursilvan has been widely used for literary purposes along with Surmiran. In the small area of Bivio/Beiva adjacent to Surmeir, only a small minority of the local population now speak a distinctive idiom bearing some linguistic characteristics of both Sursilvan and Ladin.

In conventional perspectives, as has been noted, the Upper and Lower Engadine stand in substantial contrast to the Rhenish Romansh areas.

4. For a recent bibliography on Friulian (*Furlan*) see the special edition of *Minoranze* (1976).



Map 2. *The Raeto-Romanic language territory*



Map 3. Traditional dialect areas of Romansh Graubünden

Even more marked, it is assumed, are the differences between the dialects of Graubünden and those of the Central Ladin valleys of the Italian Dolomites. Some scholars, like Prof. Heinrich Schmid (1976 pp. 7–62) of the University of Zurich, have pointed to some linguistic evidence suggesting that the Ladin of the Lower Engadine, in certain specific characteristics, bears a closer relationship to the Dolomite Ladin than to the Ladin of the Upper Engadine and other Bündner Romansh areas. This relationship he explains in terms of longer and more extensive relationships between the Tirol and the Lower Engadine than some historians and linguists have appreciated.

CHAPTER 2

Competition for the Land in Early Raetia

The Catalan poet Jacinto Verdaguer once compared the language of the Raeto-Romansh to a fragment of purple cloth torn from the toga of *roma aeterna* which dragged northward and caught on the jagged peaks of the Raetic mountains.

Sep Mudest Nay

Long before Rome extended its control over the territory of what is now Switzerland, the alpine lands were inhabited by Helvetians in the west and Raetians in the east. The Helvetii were a Celtic people. The ethnicity of the Raetic tribes is still a problem awaiting scholarly resolution. According to the testimony of Livy, the Raeti were Etruscans. What other references to the Raeti are found in ancient literature — in Pliny, Pompeius Trogus, Strabo — seem in general agreement with what Livy wrote, but there is often conflict and inconsistency in the manner in which the writers assigned tribal designations in Raetic territory. Medieval chroniclers, like Aegidius Tschudi who wrote concerning the history of Raetia, and even certain later historians, have tended to accept Livy's statement as authoritative and conclusive.⁵ Modern scholars, however, have found substantial reasons for questioning the alleged Etruscan origin of the Raeti. A number of scholars, among them Robert von Planta and Joshua Whatmough, have engaged themselves painstakingly in archaeological and linguistic research as well as in a careful analysis of place-names in order to work toward a more reliable conclusion (Whatmough 1933 v. I p. 440, 459, v. II pp. 1-7, 627; 1934 pp.

5. Livy wrote (5.33.11): 'Alpinis quoque ea (sc. Tusca) gentibus haud dubie origo est, maxima Raetia, quos loca ipsa efferarunt ne quid ex antiquo praeter sonum linguae nec cum incorruptum retinerent.' For a discussion of this and other ancient references see Whatmough (1937, pp. 181-202).

27–31; von Planta 1931 pp. 80–100; 1929 pp. 285–287; Stähelin 1934 pp. 337–368).

Evidence now available indicates that the Raetic language was not basically Etruscan but rather an Indo-European tongue which had been receptive to certain Etruscan linguistic influences at a relatively late date. Perhaps this influence was introduced, as Livy suggests, through the medium of refugees who fled from invading Gallic tribes. The Indo-European elements in the Raetic language may have been Italic as some scholars including Kretschmer believe, or Illyrian and Celtic as others, Whatmough (1937) and Bonfante (1935, pp. 141–154) among them, have concluded.

The early Roman Empire periodically took action against the Raetic forces that raided Roman settlements on the southern slopes of the Alps and descended onto the plains of the Po. Punitive expeditions against Raetic raiders proved ineffective and Roman territories continued to be vulnerable. In the year 15 B.C. a concerted attack was directed against the Raeti and Vindelici by the Emperor's two sons, Tiberius and Drusus. After the conquest of the Raetians, Rome created the province of Raetia which in the beginning embraced lands along the headwaters of the Rhone River (in the modern canton Valais), the alpine valleys of the upper Rhine and Inn Rivers and extending north to the Danube. The capital of the province was established at Augustus Vindelicorum (Augsburg). Raetia was formed as a frontier province and organized to provide a defensible frontier protecting Roman territories from hostile peoples north of the Alps. Roman control of the region permitted more effective communication and movement among the scattered legions along the Middle Rhine and upper Danube, and with Rome. Pass routes from the Brenner Pass to the Gothard Pass were secured. As early as the time of Emperor Augustus, the Romans began the construction of roads through the territory of what is now the canton Graubünden, from Como to Chur and northward through Maienfeld over St. Luziensteig to Feldkirch and Bregenz where the roads forked in several directions.

The province of Raetia was divided by Diocletian into two provinces. Raetia Prima embraced the upper Rhine Valley northward to Lake Constance with Curia Raetorum (Chur) as its capital. Raetia Secunda was formed to include southern Baavaria and the northern Tirol with its capital at Augusta Vindelicorum.

The conquest and pacification of Raetia by the Roman legions did not bring the immediate Romanization of its inhabitants, although in time the original Raetian culture disappeared so completely that few known traces of its remain except for possible linguistic relics in some place names. Roman penetration proceeded slowly and the cultural cons-

quences remained only modestly apparent. Roman remains are scarce in Graubünden; although a Roman bath was recently discovered in Chur, there are few of the inscriptions, public buildings, and imposing villas that can be found in many conquered areas of the Empire, including neighboring Helvetia.

The Raetian Alps were poor in exportable resources. There were no rich supplies of metals or well-stocked granaries in the austere region that might attract Roman economic exploitation. But Raetia did have resources in manpower, and it was not long after Roman conquest before Raetians were found among the Roman legions, especially in defensive positions along the provincial frontiers.

Military service in the legions had what Romans regarded as a 'civilizing' function for the heterogeneous people of the Empire; the Raetic legionnaires doubtlessly learned the popular speech of the Romans and other lessons that can be learned about a cultural community by serving in its armies. No farmers came from the Italic south to settle. Very few references are found in Roman literature attesting to any special interest in Raetia, its geographical peculiarities or its demographic and cultural character. It was regarded, it seems, primarily as a territory to cross and as a series of Alpine ramparts to fortify.

Chur, in time, came to possess a modest Roman settlement — a few resident military officers, a small garrison, civilian employees of the Roman government, especially some concerned with communication and transport from Rome over the Alps into Germany. It is generally believed that Romanization occurred relatively slowly and that assimilation proceeded relatively evenly in Raetia. During a long period of bilinguality, it is likely that family and community speech remained the pre-Roman tongue while the transactional language with military and administrative officials was popular Latin (Pieth 1945, p. 16).

By the fifth century, Raetia Prima was probably extensively Romanized in language and culture. Roman citizenship was extended by the Edict of Caracalla in 212 to all free inhabitants of the Empire except for a limited group.

Little is known about the spread of Christianity among the Raetians. There are no early documents or chronicles that reveal the ways in which Christian beliefs and practices gained acceptance. After the Empire extended tolerance to Christianity in 313, the new religion doubtlessly made rapid progress in Raetia Prima as it did in Helvetia to the West. The survival in Romansh of terms used in the early Roman church indicates an uninterrupted tradition of church language usage; scholars have noted that terms have survived in the region that were replaced by newer terms in France and Italy (Pieth 1945, p. 17). Churches and chapels built in

honor of saints popular in Italy appeared along the pass roads over Septimer, Bernardino, Splügen and others. Doubtlessly many earlier cultural practices were absorbed into the emerging Romanic-Christian culture of the region. Studies of Romansh folklore indicate that many of the pre-Christian legends, folk sayings, proverbs, children and adult games were given Christian forms.⁶ It is known that Asinius was made bishop of Chur in 451; it is not certain however that he was the first Raetic bishop.

By this time the Romanic speech of Raetia was doubtlessly used generally throughout the territory. Terms of Latin origin had replaced most earlier place names, terms for tools and occupations, words for animals, designations for political and administrative phenomena; from the Latin word for village (*vicus*) came the Romansh term *vitg* in Rhenish usage and *vih* along the Inn. Popular Latin which was evolving in Raetia was different lexically and phonetically from classical Latin but also, of course, from the contemporary vulgar Latin of other areas. In the late eighteenth century, Joseph Planta, a scholar of Romansh background and director of the British Museum in London, published an article showing the similarities of contemporary Romansh to the early French language as recorded in the Strassburg oaths of 842. These reveal substantial similarities but, in each case, the languages evolved further and further from original Latin with the passing of the centuries. The Raeto-Romans distinguished their speech, as contrasted to Latin, as *Rumantsch* or *Romontsch* from the Latin word *romanice*. 'In ironic tribute to the power of culture and the impotence of administration, at least once upon a time,' Benjamin Barber (1974, p. 24) writes, 'the successful rooting of Roman culture north of Italy coincided with the collapse of Roman government there.'

When the Ostrogothic kingdom was founded in 489, Raetia was included as part of the great realm which stretched from Sicily to Raetia and from Provence to Pannonia and Illyria. Raetians found advantage in their inclusion because, as part of the kingdom, they received aid against external pressures. The Ostrogoths permitted the continuance in Raetia of provincial institutions and Roman law as they had developed under Roman rule. Native-born officials continued to occupy positions of political importance and to exercise real authority.

Germanic peoples, particularly the Alemanni, had recently broken through established fortifications and settled in great numbers in the Swiss *Mittelland*. The Alemanni now became the western neighbors of

6. In 1960 the author accompanied Dr. Alfons Maissen to Curaglia to photograph and tape a group of boys playing on the hills above the town, a game which has survived since pre-Christian days with obvious Christian adaptations.

Raetia. Theodoric granted the Alemanni, who had been defeated by the Frankish king in 486, the right to settle Raetia Secunda between Lake Constance, the Iller and the Lech Rivers as well as in the northern portions of Raetia Prima. The area thus settled quickly became Germanic in language and culture. The Alemannic period of settlement came to a halt after a relatively short but intensive migration, and the ethnic frontiers thus established remained stable for a long time. In some parts of Raetia Prima heavily settled by the Alemanni, that is, in northeastern Swiss territories, sharp conflict raged between the new-comers and the Raeto-Romanic inhabitants for at least half a century. The religious differences between the two peoples made the conflict even more bitter; the Alemanni strongly resisted conversion to Raetic Christianity. The Alemanni looked upon the Romanic inhabitants as bondsmen and, where they felt strong enough, attempted to move them to less favorable lands than they occupied or to the shady sides of the mountains (Edelmann 1957, pp. 21–25). The battle over land and the gradual encroachment of Alemanni into agricultural holdings is reflected in the mixed Romanic and Germanic place names for field, meadows, pastures, and alps. Later, when the Bishopric at Chur was split with the creation of the Bishopric at Constance, the ethnic divisions were reflected in the territorial delineations. But in the late fifth century and extending through at least six decades of the sixth century, central political authority was too weak or too distracted by wars and dynastic disputes to deal effectively with the ethnic conflict (1957, pp. 21–25).

Romanic Raetians were able to defend themselves successfully against the attempts of Alemanni to settle beyond the lands opened to them by Theodoric. The inhabitants south of the border line were able to preserve the Romanic and western Christian character of their culture during this period (Pieth 1945, p. 22; Planta 1872, pp. 234–254).

The Baiovarii (Bavarians) moved in large numbers into the South Tirol, beginning the Germanization of the region's Romanic population, which remained dominant in fewer and fewer valleys. The few Ladin-speaking communities extant in the late twentieth century are remnants of the once dominant Raeto-Romanic people who lived there.

Ostrogothic rule made only a faint impress upon that portion of Raetia Prima lying outside the areas of Alemannic settlement. In the sixth century Raetia Curiensis, or in German, Churrätien, fell under the rule of Frankish kings and remained a part of their kingdom, as a more or less autonomous church-state, for two and a half centuries. The Raetic territory now embraced Graubünden, Gaster, Sargans, Toggenburg, Appenzell, the upper Rhine with neighboring Vorarlberg above Montlingen-Gözis, the Ill valley and side valleys to the Arlberg pass, upper

Paznaun with Galtür and Ischgl. The Vintschgau was ecclesiastically oriented toward Chur but was politically joined to Tirol under Bavarian control (Pieth 1945, p. 23).

In Merovingian times, as in the Roman period, the *praeses* were locally determined and the clerics elected the bishops of Chur. The Frankish kings, much troubled by political problems less remote from the seat of their central authority, contented themselves in large measure with only limited intrusion into purely local aspects of political administration in Raetia Curiensis. The traditions of provincial and municipal autonomy in political and religious affairs were by this time strongly established in Raetia Curiensis. They remained under the Merovingians without fundamental reorganization. Since in the conduct of government the episcopal influence was paramount, Raetia Curiensis became a notable refuge for Christendom. Chur, as the principal city, was a spiritual and intellectual center in the early Middle Ages for what is now eastern Switzerland and western Austria (Pieth 1945, p. 25).

To the surrounding peoples, the Raeto-Romanic peoples were *Wältsch* or *Welsch*, the Germanic term for non-Germans (as in Welsh for the Celts of Wales). Raetia Curiensis was widely referred to as *Churwalchen* or *Churwalen*, reflecting the distinctions found in the language, culture and institutions of the region.

The Victorid family emerged as the most eminent family among the Romanic aristocracy. So powerful did the family become that at times both of the two highest offices, the episcopal office and the *praeses*, were held by members of the Victorid family, indeed sometimes by the same person. The *praeses*, who exercised highest judicial powers, were not unlimited in the scope of their functions despite the remoteness of Raetia Curiensis from the source of central political authority. They were representatives of the Frankish rulers and ultimately responsible to them. Moreover, the bishops and *praeses*, in order to function constructively, needed the support of the landed aristocracy (*principes*) of which they, themselves, were a part.

A relatively complex system of social stratification had evolved by this time. From the ranks of the aristocracy came the principal functionaries. Vassals of the landed aristocracy and other elements of the lower nobility (*potentes, altae personae*) provided the intermediate judicial and administrative functionaries. The subordinate officials, collectors of taxes and tributes, were drawn in large part from the free population (Pieth 1945, p. 24, Meyer-Marthaler 1948, pp. 5-56).

When the Carolingians came to power in the middle of the eighth century, changes occurred in the governmental structure of the Frankish state which were to alter the political and social institutions of Raetia

Curiensis drastically. Tendencies toward the centralization of political power were soon apparent in the administrative innovations of Pippin; these tendencies were even more strongly developed by Charlemagne, who extended the royal prerogatives in numerous areas of political and economic life.

Pippin altered land tenure in such a way as to make it conform more closely to feudal forms in other Frankish territories than it had previously. Whether he got lands by secularization of church holdings or by other means is not known, but he secured lands and gave them as feudal fiefs to the vassals of the old aristocracy and to members of the native free population. Increasingly, elements of the various social classes, including the aristocracy, were drawn into his service. As this occurred, Pippin strengthened his political and military position in Raetia Curiensis largely at the expense of the power which had belonged to the higher Romanic nobility and to the detriment of the autonomous traditions of the region. Significantly, however, Pippin took care to insure that only natives of Raetia were given Raetic landholdings (Pieth 1945, p. 30).

The Raetian rector, Constantius, fearing the disruption which he anticipated from the increasing number of Carolingian innovations, appealed to the ruler to preserve the particular Romanic customs and legal system (Pult 1928, pp. 23–40, Meyer-Marthaler and Perret 1955, p. 23). For a time it had appeared as though the alterations in Raetic society, while considerable, would nevertheless effect no more than moderate change. But they continued. As long as his friend, Bishop Remedius of Chur, lived, Charlemagne hesitated to make a radical reorganization of the political and religious structure of Raetia Curiensis. When Remedius died in 806 Charlemagne felt free to establish a new definition of the political and religious authority to be exercised, respectively, by secular institutions and by the bishop. Conforming to the territorial divisions existing elsewhere in the realm, Raetia was divided into an upper and lower part. Each of the two *Grafschaften* [counties] was to be governed by a count directly responsible to the imperial authority. This arrangement meant the end of the princely powers of old Romanic aristocratic families like the Victorids, who had held the offices of *praeses*, rectors, and episcopal office. The bishop lost his secular power and was left impoverished by the changes. Successors of Constantius would continue to govern as rectors in the name of the ruler and with more direct responsibility to him.

The Carolingian control marked the beginning of strong German ethnic influences in Raetia Curiensis. German counts rather than Raeto-Romanic nobles were given the two *Grafschaften*. With this change, the

Raeto-Romanic population looked upon the Bishop of Chur as the principal protector of their culture and ethnic interests until the ecclesiastical organization of Raetia was also Germanized. (Planta 1872, p. 391.) Through Bishop Verendar of Chur they addressed themselves to King Lothair, asking for the preservation of their laws and traditions. Lothair answered, in 843, that no one was to be judged other than by the laws and customs which had been passed to him by his fore-fathers (Meyer-Marthaler and Perret 1955, pp. 55-56). According to this principle, Germans were to be judged under Germanic law and Raeto-Romans under the *Lex Romana Curiensis*. This was a body of law which represented a complex fusion of Germanic influences with Roman legal principles which were often imperfectly remembered and not infrequently misinterpreted (Meyer-Marthaler 1948, p. 40). With all its limitations it had nevertheless become part of popular Raetic traditions and a symbol of regional distinctiveness.

Despite Lothair's assurance, however, Roman law as represented by the *Lex Romana Curiensis* fell into disuse in the courts presided over by the German counts although it survived for a time in the courts over which the bishop had control (Planta 1872, p. 392).

The old Roman institution of the *Curia*, a representative council in Chur, was abolished along with other vestiges of popular participation in civic affairs at the provincial and city level. These and other measures represented an interruption in the development of Raetic traditions of regional and local autonomy rather than in their destruction.

Since its founding the Bishopric of Chur had been included within the territorial jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Milan.⁷ In 843 it was made a part of the Archdiocese of Mainz and Germanic influences in the Raetic diocese were thereby further strengthened. At the same time, the right of the Raetic clergy to elect their bishop was taken from them. The Frankish kings reserved that right for themselves. Thus the institution which had for centuries been the bulwark of Christian-Romanic influence in Raetia became thoroughly Germanized. For seven centuries after 849 the bishops of Chur were to bear, without exception, Germanic names (Pieth 1945, p. 35).

Shortly after the diocesan change, the synod of Mainz published an edict which stated that the people of the archdiocese should be given religious instruction in their own language (Planta 1872, p. 383). Such

7. The Merovingian kings usually took care to separate a Frankish diocese from foreign connections. The diocese of Chur had been allowed to be an exception to this practical principle. Despite their privileged position, the bishops of Chur were careful not to act in a way which could provoke a change. They took part in the Frankish synods as royal officials.

instruction was actually provided to some extent; nevertheless, the influence of the German bishop and his court upon Raetia, and especially upon the city of Chur, strongly favored Germanization.

Within the short period of six decades, the political institutions of Raetia Curiensis lost their Romanic character and assumed a Frankish character. The class structure was altered and a new system of ethnic stratification emerged. At the time of the Testament of Bishop Tello of Chur (758–773), hardly a German name appeared in the lists of Raetic functionaries. By 830, in contrast, major officials and their subordinates were predominantly Alemannic and Frankish. The first counts of Raetia were, of course, Germanic, beginning with Hunfrid; the lesser officials who came with them were also Germanic (Meyer-Marthaler 1948, pp. 56–59, Pieth 1945, p 34). The old Romanic aristocracy lost its hold on the land and the new holders of benefices and fiefs were predominantly German in ethnicity. People performing services for the elite, and tradespeople, followed the influx of the upper classes so that the middle social strata became substantially Germanized by the influx of persons drawn from similar strata in Alemannic and Frankish cities and courts. Count Roderick in the ninth century, hoping for an even more extensive ethnic succession, encouraged the replacement of Romanic peasants by German peasants' families, who could be expected to give their loyalty to him rather than to the former landed families and to show themselves in other ways as well to be more tractable than the Romanic natives in matters concerning regional attachments and traditions of local autonomy (Sprecher 1922, p. 76).

Crown lands were divided into nine *ministeria*: 1. *Ministerium Vallis Drusiana* (Vorarlberg), 2. *Ministerium in Planis* (presently Liechtenstein, Sargans, Gasterland to Schännis and the circle of Maienfeld), 3. *Ministerium Tuverasca* (Bündner Oberland), 4. *Ministerium Impedinis* (Oberhalbstein area), 5. *Ministerium Curisinum* (probably Chur, Fünf Dörfer, Pratigau, Schanfigg, Rhäzüns), 6. *Ministerium Tumillasca* (Domleschg, Schams, Rheinwald), 7. *Ministerium Bergalliae* (Bergell), 8. *Ministerium Endena* (Vinschgau, Unter-Engadine, Münster) 9. *Ministerium Remedii*, (Ober-Engadine) (Pieth 1945, p. 33). The territorial designations remained Romanic but most of the appointed functionaries were Germans of recent settlement. Interruption of old Roman institutions was of great importance in the sense of liquidating social arrangements that would otherwise have continued, perhaps for centuries. The particular institutional substitutions that the Carolingians introduced, however, were not of paramount importance in themselves. Indeed, within a generation after the death of Charlemagne, erosion of these innovations had begun.

A much more enduring transformation occurred in the ethnic character of the population, in the patterns of language use, and in social stratification. These changes were set in motion by the widely manifested preference of those wielding power for Germans rather than Raeto-Romans. As feudal institutions were introduced into Raetia by Carolingian rulers, the consistency with which Germans were favored in the granting of lands and prerogatives appears to be a deliberately planned effort at ethnic replacement.

Raetia Curiensis was transformed in much the same way as later overseas settlement colonies were transformed by European colonial powers. In general, Merovingian rulers had scrupulously avoided introducing non-Raetic elements into the political machinery of the region. Carolingians, in contrast, recruited upper and middle level functionaries from German areas. The Merovingians acknowledged the importance of acceding to the regional pride and sense of ethnicity of the Romanic inhabitants. The power of the Carolingians was such as to allow them not only to ignore such sensitivities but to counter them with systematic efforts at ethnic replacement.

In this period ethnic transformation occurred very largely through immigration of Germanic elements. Assimilation was also a factor of importance. Where Germanic elements penetrated into Romanic communities and were isolated they were absorbed. Because of the scale of the migration of Germans into peripheral areas of Raetia Curiensis, the Romanic peoples there were more often inundated. There is no accurate way of piecing together historical evidence clearly enough to permit a precise estimate of the relative importance of these factors nor is there a way of measuring the manner in which these factors interplayed in various times and places. In areas along the receding language/culture frontiers in the northern portions of Raetia Curiensis, the heavy influx doubtlessly was the primary factor in the shift. The area of Romanic culture suffered contraction along the periphery of its territory at some times and in some places rapidly, and at other times and in other places slowly. As the center of ecclesiastical and political administration of Raetia, Chur experienced German penetration early although it lay in the heart of Raeto-Roman cultural territory. Chur became bilingual early; the two language communities were both significantly represented in its population, perhaps until the fifteenth century. Particularly in the most mountainous areas of Raetia, where traditions of local autonomy were well developed and where there was less intrusion in this period from Germanic immigrants, changes in language and culture were relatively minor.

The field of sociolinguistics is demonstrating that much can be learned about the relationships of linguistically-dissimilar groups through the analysis of the patterns of communication prevailing in areas of contact. An individual's language environment is, of course, formed by all the regular and innumerable occasional acts of communication in which he participates. These acts may be classified in various ways as one attempts to find regularities or patterns in human behavior.

In communities in which two or more language groups are stable components of the population, it is revealing to examine the respective functions for which each language is used. Two languages may be spoken in such a community by two groups, each of which uses its mother tongue for all levels of communication. If there are sharp class and occupational cleavages between them, these would be reflected in patterns of language use and in linguistic specialization. Assimilation begins when one of the several competing languages begins to invade the domains of use previously reserved for the other language. The necessity for one or both of the unilingual populations to learn the other language is given increasing recognition and, in time, bilinguality becomes general. Unless a permanent pluralistic balance is achieved, bilinguality yields in favor of the increasingly predominant use of one of the languages until its use becomes more or less exclusive. As is evidenced in Raetic communities a language shift may occur as rapidly as within a generation, or it may be completed only after centuries of general bilinguality, or it may not occur at all.

The introduction of large Germanic cohorts at various social strata served to disrupt the existing institutional and cultural life of the communities involved. Germanic aliens and Romanic natives competed in communities of influx for positions in the multi-ethnic environments that were thus created. Human beings in such contexts compete with sentiments and customs as well as with their skills or wealth (Shibutani, Kwan and Billigmeier 1965, p. 166). In Raetia the German aliens had the competitive advantage of speaking the language and sharing the ethnicity of those who had acquired political sovereignty. The influx of German immigrants altered modes of language use in communities where immigrants became significantly present. The sociology of language is concerned both with the way in which societal changes affected language and with how changes in language and language use may reveal societal alterations.

A classification of domains of language usage appropriate for a study of medieval Raetia Curiensis might include: (1) chancellery and literary

use, (2) the church, (3) political administration, (4) community economic life, and (5) the family.⁸

1. Chancellery and literary use.

Replacing the Romanic elite in Raetia Curiensis with a Germanic elite meant that the language used in formal and informal discourse in political affairs at the provincial level shifted from Romanic to Germanic. However, Latin remained the chancellery language in Raetia for centuries after the replacement of the old elite had been effected.

In the generation before Charlemagne's efforts to improve the standards of Latin usage, the Latin of public and private documents strongly reflected the spoken Romanic tongue which evolved into Romansh. The Latin appearing in Raetic writings, as was true in other regions using popular Latin speech, represented a 'compromise Latin' combining popular usage and classical forms (von Planta 1920–25, p. 84).

The strong influence of the common speech upon written Latin was, of course, not deliberately cultivated as far as we know. One would expect instead that the Merovingian scribes wrote as well as they knew how to write and that their vulgarisms were unintentional (von Planta 1920–25).

From the characteristic errors made by such writers much can be learned about the evolution of the Romansh language (Müller 1959, p. 94). The speech relics of medieval popular usage embedded in Raetic Latin are prized by present-day Raeto-Romanic scholars for that reason.⁹ Certain errors in Latin also appeared in the work of German writers and scribes, but the Germans learned Latin as a foreign tongue and it was easier for them to make a distinction between popular Romanic speech and Latin. Only in this exceedingly modest way did Romansh (and even less frequently medieval German) find its way into chancellery or literary use.

When, in the later medieval period, German began to replace Latin as the chancellery language, the change reflected not only the pre-eminence of the German element in the classes exercising political and ecclesiastical power in Raetia Curiensis but the parallel tendencies in neighboring territories including those which became part of the Swiss Confederation.

8. These domains represent a modification of those recommended for general use by Georg Schmidt-Rohr (1932).

9. See the commentaries in the Romansh dictionary-encyclopedia, the *Dicziunari Rumantsch Grischun*, now being published in a series of volumes by the Società Retorumantscha.

To many Germans of the upper and middle social strata who established residence in Raetia, the popular Romanic speech was regarded as simply a badly corrupted form of Latin, lacking any of the prestige of the classic language from which it originated — if, indeed, any connection was recognized at all. With the replacement of the Romanic elite, the language came increasingly to be associated with the peasantry. The Swabian counts of Montfort-Werdenberg-Sargans who settled in Raetic territory in the thirteenth century, for example, treated the Romanic tongue as a contemptible peasant language (Perret 1957, p. 123). Ulrich Campell, writing of this period in his sixteenth century chronicle, explained that such noble circles considered the Romansh, whom they called Wältsch or Welsch or Churwelsch, as barbarians (applying a form of the term Germanic peoples often used for non-Germans; for example Welsh for the Celtic people in western Britain). The factor of prestige clearly suggests that in transactions with Romanic peoples, the Germanic nobles expected the former to accommodate themselves to German usage. There are abundant evidences that the Germanic nobility often consciously and deliberately furthered German cultural influences at the expense of the Romanic traditions (1957, p. 123). As has been noted they commonly exerted efforts to strengthen the German ethnic elements in the region through induced immigration.

To individual Romansh who aspired to political or economic influence, the advantages of assimilation were apparent.

2. *The church*

In the bishop's court at Chur, Latin remained the church language in regularly prescribed domains. The informal language of the bishop's court (*Bischofshof*) and the cathedral chapter (*Domkapitel*) in Chur shifted to German with the changes in the ethnicity of the personnel: the shift was made increasingly apparent with the consistent appointment of Germanic bishops — a practice which became a tradition.

There seems to have been little deliberate effort on the part of priests or monks to alter the common language patterns existing in the communities served. In principle, where the clergy were intent upon ministering to the needs of parish populations they were more or less bound by both prescription and practicality to communicate and instruct in the language that gave them most direct access to those whom they served. German priests and monks who came to serve Raeto-Romanic communities were not always linguistically prepared to do this. Although there may be little evidence that there was an intent to Germanize

Romanic parishes, the increasing presence of German priests and monks did often add to Germanizing tendencies.

This influence, however, was not always so clearly manifested. In the earlier part of the Middle Ages, in the territories under the influence of the monastery of Pfäfers in St. Gallen, the administration of economic and political affairs as well as the pastoral activities of the monks reflected the predominantly Raeto-Romanic element in the religious order. Even after the twelfth century, when the number of German monks increased to the point that they were more numerous than the Romanic monks, pastoral duties required the use of Romansh in the heavily Romansh village communities (Perret 1949, pp. 29–32). Later the town around the monastery became German in speech and with the changing patterns of language use, Germanizing influences spread further into communities in the valley below. Ultimately the ethnic balance shifted and the same principle increasingly obliged the clergy to minister to their flocks in German.

The Benedictine abbey at Disentis/Mustér served the strongly Romanic area of Cadi along the upper reaches of the Rhine. Although German-speaking monks were also well represented here they did not exert such influences toward Germanization as would lead to a language shift. Nevertheless their presence did indeed sustain Germanic cultural influences in the area even though it has remained predominantly Romansh to the present.

3. Political administration

The political aspects of life above the community level remained largely in the hands of the bishop, nobles, and those who served them. This meant that German rather than Romansh was the language used in political and administrative transactions. What kept this fact from being of more than modest significance were the local traditions of community self-sufficiency and autonomy; these traditions, as we will note, survived the attempts to impress feudalism upon Raetic society. Those Romansh who became a part of the administrative apparatus in this period were doubtlessly drawn into a largely German milieu in language, culture, and personal association.

4. Community economic life

In the eighth-century Testament of Bishop Tello a remarkable portrait is

provided of contemporary communities in various parts of Raetia. By virtue of the descriptions Bishop Tello presents, it is clear that the areas particularly mentioned were well settled, that present-day communities were already established, that the land was divided up for different uses — for crops, meadows, pastures, gardens, orchards, vineyards, woodlands, etc. — and that there were class differences in the rural villages.

In the mountainous terrain of Raetia Curiensis, villagers were acquainted with hundreds of place names within the confines of the broader community, including the innumerable meadows, pastures, cultivated fields, hills, crests, ravines, streams, woods and other important geographical features having either economic consequence for the inhabitants or some historic or mythological importance. Community language use is, of course, reflected in these geographical designations (*Flurnamen*).

The study of contemporary Flurnamen and references to the same features in historical documents has added significantly to present knowledge of the language and ethnicity of community populations in Raetia. In the Raetic place names, traces of Romanized relics of the language of pre-Roman inhabitants may be discovered. In areas presently Romansh, the place names are predominantly of Romanic origin. The persistence of Romanic designations in areas now predominantly of German or Schwyzerdütsch speech — often in Germanized adaptations — reveals that a language shift occurred; moreover, evidence relating to the chronological and geographical progression of Germanization is found in toponymy. Much more can be learned by the interdisciplinary use of the impressive scholarship in the field of Raetic place names, by Dr. Robert von Planta and others, that would help us understand the process of ethnic transformation. That bilinguality lasted a long time in many areas is certainly suggested by the fact that not only did large numbers of Romanic Flurnamen survive in areas now inhabited by German-Swiss, but that the original pronunciation was often preserved. Prof. Chasper Pult (1928, p. 25) points to such place names as Ragáz, Sargáns, and Saléz, which are pronounced with accent upon the last syllable according to Romansh usage rather than German.

In the mountainous redoubt that became the canton Graubünden, the particularly strong traditions of self-sufficiency and autonomy made the Romansh villagers there less vulnerable to the intrusion of influences affecting language use and cultural integrity than elsewhere. Raetic communities from earliest times were characterized by pronounced tendencies toward self-sufficiency in economic life and autonomy in decisions relating directly to their social and economic affairs. These

traditions were given substance by the *Markgenossenschaft*, which was a collective association of people in a local community or group of communities. Such associations were found in many places in pre-feudal central Europe, especially in Frankish Germany. In Raetia, these common associations developed special strength and suffered less erosion with the introduction of feudalism. The community was organized for the common use of meadows, woods, springs, streams, quarries, orchard lands, etc. The question of ownership was a theoretical issue; the right to use the land belonged to the community by established practice. As feudalism evolved, rights of ownership over productive fields were increasingly exercised by feudal lords. Gradually the areas which had, by use, been part of the *Markgenossenschaft* were effectively claimed by feudal lords. Forests were cut down and manorial villages were established to exploit the lands thus made available for agriculture. In most places, then, common lands were gradually reduced to very marginal pieces, often no more than marshlands and other unproductive areas.

In Raetia, geography and cultural traditions worked to impede the spread of feudal claims to the common lands and the erosion of the collective association was slower and the dimensions of change more modest. The isolation of mountain communities in valleys surrounded by high Alpine peaks, glaciers, cliffs and gorges protected Raetia from easy access and promoted a sense of separateness. The thinness of the rocky soil of mountain slopes was less inviting to feudal claimants than were more fertile areas. For these and other reasons the *Markgenossenschaft* in Raetic communities remained much more extensively intact.¹⁰

By common practice, everyone within the territorial limits included in such an association (a single village community in some instances or all the communities of a valley in others), shared in the collective — irrespective of class, rank or importance in the world beyond the territorial confines of the community included. 'Free peasants, descendants of the originally unfree class of Roman colonists (*coloni*), local property owners, and land-holding noblemen with vassal status in the Frankish Empire found themselves in a uniquely egalitarian situation' (Barber 1974, p. 115). The communal associations were the means by which members of village communities were able to make decisions for themselves in those common aspects of economic and social affairs that were of most concern to them. These associations had much to do with the fact that democratic institutions developed so early in

10. Barber (1974) presents an excellent discussion of the *Markgenossenschaft* in his scholarly account of the traditions of freedom in Graubünden.

Raetia. The addition of political issues and the development of political consciousness came later with what appeared to be threats from outside the community to the traditional exercise of rights of autonomy and self-regulation by village communities. The Markgenossenschaften were both cause and effect of the characteristic values of self-sufficiency and self-regulation of Raetic villagers. Membership in the common association must surely have enhanced the sense of common identity, social solidarity, and shared collective experience. The cohesiveness doubtlessly made the intrusion of those of different language and culture more difficult even when they carried the symbols of governmental authority. As important as the strong sense of community rights and privileges has been in the development of Bündner democracy, it was perhaps inevitably associated with a local or regional particularism that was later to strengthen dialect differences among Romansh-speakers and inhibit a sense of 'national' unity among the inhabitants of communities along the Rhine and Inn valleys.

It would be well to stress here that geography was not a decisive element in the evolution of the values of Raetic freedom and autonomy although it has conditioned the attitudes and institutions that led to the evolution of Raetic democracy. As Barber (1974, p. 105) points out, 'The grand generalization that mountains make men free . . . seems no more persuasive than the competing shibboleth "cities make men free"'. . . . Just as oligarchically-governed cities have grown alongside democratic ones, so unfree mountain states have been as numerous as free ones not only in the pre-modern societies of the Andes and the Himalayas but also in the Alps themselves'.

5. *The family*

There are lamentably few materials that relate directly to family language use and sense of ethnicity among the Raeto-Romanic and Germanic families. From the foregoing discussion of community life in this period of the Middle Ages, one would expect family patterns of communication to reflect the ethnic homogeneity and social cohesiveness of the Romansh communities in Raetia. Where a rapid influx of aliens occurred, as German settlers moved into Romansh communities along the moving language frontier, family language use among both ethnic groups would depend on a number of variables in the milieu: relative proportions of each group, rate of ingress, forms of economic accommodation, degree of ethnic segregation, etc. Where, as in Chur, the two language communities lived in the same town for centuries, bilingualism may have

occurred in many families, particularly among certain classes of the Romansh population.

The kinds of personal names a set of parents gave their children represented an indication of prevailing language use in the family during the child-bearing ages. The appearance of personal names and, later, family names in the same way in medieval documents provides at least some evidence concerning the ethnic composition of specific communities or population segments. While names are in general useful as indicators of ethnic origins, they must clearly be taken as evidence only with caution. This is especially true where, as in Raetia, a new ethnic group had established itself as the ruling elite (Pult 1928, p. 25).

Raeto-Romans in the Middle Ages generally bore personal names like *Vigilius*, *Orscinus*, *Silvana*, and *Constantius* — names whose Latin origin are clearly apparent — as contemporary Romansh may bear the names *Vigeli*, *Ursicin*, *Silvio*, and *Constantin*.

To some Raeto-Romans, aspiring for advancement in social and economic position suggested the advantage of assimilation, that is, of switching to the use of German and of changing ethnic identity (Perret 1957, p. 123). From the time that the new Germanic elite first began to replace the old Romanic elite in Raetia in the ninth century, the Raeto-Romans occasionally accepted German names as a matter both of fashion and practical advantage (von Planta 1920–25, p. 97). In the later medieval period, when family names came into general use, Romansh sometimes took family names showing occupational designations in their German rather than Romansh form — particularly in ethnically-mixed areas. This practice was especially widespread among those whose occupations bound them most closely to the Germanic upper classes. Perret cites a document of 1410 in which a person described as a Romansh ironsmith in Flums bore the German occupational appellation *Ysen-schmidt* (1957, p. 123, also Richardson 1970). In instances in which craftsmen were engaged primarily in economic relationships with the Germanic elite, such names may well have been assigned for others' convenience rather than chosen by the Romansh themselves. For various reasons names were sometimes translated from earlier Romansh forms: thus *Catscheder* became *Jäger*; *Molitor*, *Müller*; *Paler*, *Kessler*; *Sartor*, *Schneider*, and so on (Perret 1950, p. 24).

As we have seen in the discussion of domains of language usage in Raetia Curiensis in the Middle Ages, the data are indeed fragmentary, as one would expect. The mosaic that results from piecing together the fragments can only represent the vague outlines of the patterns as they once existed. These outlines are nevertheless significant in what they suggest about contact among Germans and Raeto-Romans in that period.

Using many different kinds of materials, historians and linguists have been able to reconstruct the general outlines of the movement of the speech frontier between the Romanic and Germanic elements in the early Middle Ages.

In the most general terms then, as Prof. Chasper Pult (1928, p. 47) has noted, the area around Lake Constance was still Romanic in the eighth century and was subsequently Germanized through the heavy influx of Alemannic and Frankish elements moving progressively into what is now the canton of St. Gallen. As the Romanic speech area contracted, areas like the canton Glarus and the Tirol became peripheral to the main core of Romanic culture. These areas were, for a time, on the language/culture frontier until their Germanization was largely completed between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. In some areas of the Tirol, however, Ladin remained after the thirteenth century and in a few valleys of the South Tirol it survives to the present.

The loss of Romanic territory in this period seems monumental; it has to be seen, however, in terms of the several centuries in which the transformations took place.

Politically, Raetia Curiensis became part of the territory of the Duke of Swabia, and hence of the German Empire, in the tenth century. It remained under Swabian rule until the thirteenth century. The tendencies toward stronger centralized control which Charlemagne had so forcefully instituted began to weaken gradually within decades of his death. The bishops of Chur were able to extend their secular power decisively during the tenth century. In this period Otto I gave his close and trusted friend, Bishop Hartbert of Chur, a series of gifts and lands and prerogatives. Succeeding rulers, Otto II and Otto III, gave additional gifts and immunities. Further grants were given to the bishops of Chur by Frederick I (Barbarossa) who elevated the episcopal office in Chur to the rank of prince-bishop. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the bishop of Chur was at the height of his secular power. His various rights and possessions extended in a complex pattern over a great part of what is now Graubünden. The most important area of secular control lay in the district (*Cent*) around Chur. In other territories, some compact and others broadly scattered. He held a bewildering variety of feudal rights that had been accumulating over the generations.

The bishop gave certain of his officials and vassals land and feudal rights. But the German noble houses in Raetia competed with the bishops of Chur for power. Individually they competed with one another as well. If individually and collectively the nobles were not able to block the emergence of the bishop as the pre-eminent wielder of political and ecclesiastical power in Raetia, they could and did impede it. The free

noble families (*Freiherren*) of Vaz, Rhazüns, Belmont and Toggenburg were among the eminent houses seeking to establish feudal rights in Raetia Curiensis. With this feudal fragmentation and competition, 'castles sprang up like mountain wild flowers, dotting the crags of Raetia with a profusiveness that cannot be matched anywhere in Europe' (Barber 1974, p. 32).

Free lords in Raetia, in order to extend the population base of their lands and agricultural productivity, recruited settlers from the upper Rhone valley who, in return for grants of land, were bound to provide military service wherever such service was required by the lords. Thus in the late thirteenth century another kind of Germanic population was introduced into Raetia and its settlements interspersed among the Romansh valleys.

Despite the impulses among the noble families for political expansion and consolidation of feudal power, the social and physical milieu of Alpine Raetia was not favorable for the development of feudal institutions. Certainly one factor that accounts for the weakness of feudalism there lay in the rocky Alpine fields and the paucity of natural resources; mountain agriculture provided little reward in return for the high costs of exercising effective political and military control. There were many free men among the agricultural population. The strength of communal rights and traditions of autonomy reflected in the institution of the *Markgenossenschaft* made it difficult for either the bishops of Chur or the competing lords to consolidate their power into a viable feudal state. The feudal elements had not been able to reduce the communal lands embraced by the *Markgenossenschaften* in the same way that was possible in areas where the traditions embodied were not so deeply entrenched.

In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a fear spread among a number of elements in the population of Raetia that the Habsburg Empire might seek a direct control of this region which had enjoyed the neglect of Swabian rulers. By 1360 the threat appeared increasingly critical. A bishop of foreign origin, Peter Gelyto of Bohemia, occupied the episcopal seat in Chur and sought aid from the Empire against the free nobles of Raetia. This act was seen as a conspiracy to introduce a direct and permanent Austrian intervention in Raetian affairs. Growing ferment was manifested in the town council of Chur, the independent cathedral chapter of the bishop's court, and among representatives of communities and noble families. The common concern of disparate groups led to the formation of the first of the three Raetic Leagues that were eventually to form the Republic of the Three Leagues.

The League of the House of God was established in 1367, not as a

transient association for dealing with a temporary threat but as a permanent structure (Metz 1967).

The foundation of the Gray League occurred in 1395. The free lords and free peasants responded to the call of the abbot of the Benedictine Abbey in Disentis to meet and consider how the external and internal threats might be relieved. Internecine struggles among feudal elements were ripping apart the *part sura* [upper portion] of the Rhine valley.

The League of Ten Jurisdictions was formed among communities lying along much of the Raetian frontier with Habsburg Austria.

The Leagues entered into cooperation with one another in serving their common purposes but they were not formally united until 1524. In the meantime alliances between the Leagues were formed with the Swiss cantons.

Feudal institutions in Raetia in this period were weakened by the self-liquidation of a number of the leading noble houses seeking to establish feudal states in the area. The noble house of Vaz which was gradually establishing pre-eminence among contending noble families was left without heirs by the early death of Donat von Vaz in 1337. Other noble houses also died out: Belmont in 1380, Toggenburg in 1436, Rhazüns in 1458, and Werdenberg-Sargans in 1503. Other, less powerful, noble families also were left without heirs or suffered impoverishment and disappeared from the arena of contention in Raetia.

The nobles had not understood how to care for the lands and prerogatives they possessed. They were unwilling to abandon their customary preoccupation with military interests and activities. Direct involvement with agricultural pursuits was thought to be beneath their dignity and they could see no reason why they should concern themselves. As time passed, more and more of the tasks of farm management and collection of rents, as well as judicial functions, were assumed by their various underlings — often without the kind of supervision necessary to prevent abuse of authority and corruption.

Because the rents charged for land use were fixed, those peasants who paid in money (increasingly inflated) were able to acquire particular advantage. The economic position of the free lords was correspondingly worsened.

The noble families took little interest in the growing trade relationships with Italian towns and ignored the advantages that could come from portage over pass routes. In some instances servants and functionaries attached to noble families were able to acquire some of the advantages the families had possessed as when, for example, the servant of Jörg von Werdenberg-Sargans became steward of the castle at Ortenstein on the death of the last of the line. The people who benefited most were ordinary